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The Moron

THE REFUSAL of the British Government to grant a passport to Mohamed Al Fayed is nothing short of a disgrace.

This country has a long history of extending open arms to foreign businessmen who wish to adopt Britain as their chosen residence.

We at the Moron know full well the contribution such men have made to the rich tapestry of our national heritage.

We think especially of our previous proprietor, the late Robert Maxwell, a greatly loved philanthropist, patriot and crook. *(Surely "publisher"? Ed.)*

No one did more than Captain Bob (as he was affectionately known by all those he paid to keep quiet) to enrich himself at the expense of others less fortunate than him.

Would Jack Straw have refused Robert Maxwell a passport?

Then why, asks the Moron, is Maxwell's natural heir denied his place in the Sun *(Surely "the Moron"? Ed.)* as the rightful inheritor of this fine English tradition?

The Moron Says

Give him a fuggin' passport Mr Straw or he'll dish the dirt on you and your friends. Geddit?

© The Daily Mohamed

"It's the first time in 300 years we've been able to register our apathy"

BEST USE OF HISTORICAL IMAGERY

"Let me not give you the impression, which I think would be erroneous, that the Apaches are somehow the 7th Cavalry arriving on the scene."
— Jamie Shea, NATO briefing, 11 April

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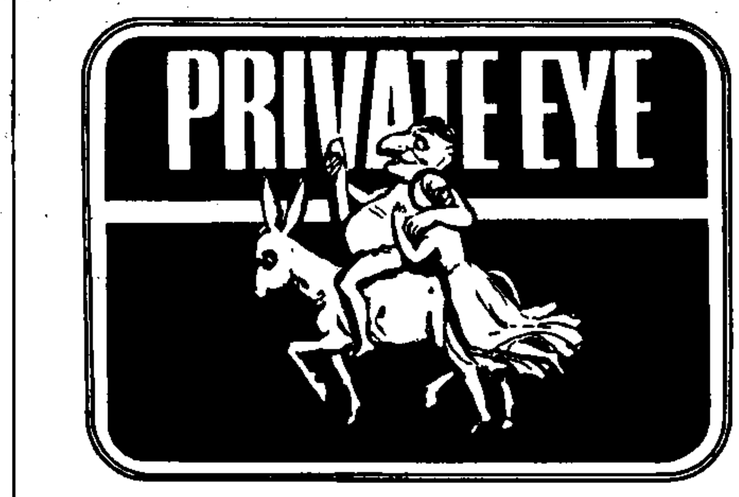

COLOUR SECTION

WHILE London mourned the victims of the nail bomb which killed three people, including a pregnant woman, at the Admiral Duncan pub in Soho, an unpleasant row was taking place between Westminster city council and its £40m refuse and street cleaning contractors Onyx (see *Eyes passim*), whose job it was to clean up afterwards.

After the police forensic team had completed its work, homophobic Onyx workers, backed by their management, refused to clear up the debris outside the Admiral Duncan on the grounds that it was a known gay pub. Onyx claimed its staff would be at risk of contracting HIV after coming into contact with blood from the victims because they "didn't have the right equipment".

In fact heavy boots, gloves and aprons available to any company engaged in refuse disposal would have given the workers all the protection they needed. Furious Westminster council officials had to pay thousands of pounds to another company to do the job instead.

WHO will rebuild Serbia and put Humpty Milosevic together again? Now that Nato is targeting the whole Yugoslav economy, destroying such fearsome "dual use" facilities as a vacuum-cleaner plant and a cigarette factory, the scope for reconstruction contracts widens daily.

After only 20 days of the war Nato was estimating the cost of repairing infrastructure at £8bn. Serb economists now put the figure at £70bn. While some may regard this as an economic disaster, others can see a most lucrative opportunity. And the recent bombing of a plant in Krusevac which made bulldozers and excavators means reconstruction work will depend largely on foreign contractors. Share prices of German building firms have already soared in anticipation.

The Croatian experience shows how it can work. Franjo Tudjman, president of Croatia, is in some ways a more convincing fascist than Milosevic, with his ruritanian uniform, denial of the Nazi holocaust and rehabilitation of the wartime Ustashe. He is certainly capable of ethnic cleansing, as 200,000 Serbs from Krajina learned to their cost. As the US state department has admitted, the regime, while nominally democratic, is "in reality authoritarian".

All in all, the perfect investment climate. The western firms who profit from the Serbian conflict will probably include many of those involved in Croatia, as they already have a presence in the region and know how to make money from the aftermath of war. These include Walter Bau of Germany, Asaldi of Italy and French giant Bouygues. The American company Bechtel, which is currently overseeing the Jubilee Line extension in London, has very big roadbuilding deals in Croatia.

However, there is still room for a bit of British enterprise. Trade minister Brian Wilson has made two official trips to Croatia, the latest only a month before Nato started bombing Belgrade. "With nearly 30 participating companies, this mission is one of the largest ever to visit Croatia," he drooled. "This is a clear indication that UK companies recognise the growing potential of the market."

RMC (Ready Mixed Concrete) has the largest investment, having bought a cement plant in Split. Needless to say, cement will be much in demand for rebuilding all those wrecked bridges over the Danube. Meanwhile, Alstom and Powergen, which are hoping to win power-plant contracts in Croatia, have no doubt noticed that Nato's attacks on the Serb electricity supply may open up enticing opportunities. If Milosevic concedes some sort of UN protectorate in the south of Kosovo, we may witness the charming spectacle of European firms making big money from putting Serbia together again while the people for whom we went to war are forced to live in wretched refugee camps in Kosovo.

THERE were a couple of gaffes in our coverage of Nato's 50th birthday party. In describing DaimlerChrysler, one of the sponsors, as a "non-military company" we somehow overlooked its aerospace subsidiary, Dasa, which is busily promoting the Eurofighter. Apologies to DaimlerChrysler shareholders: we wouldn't want them to think that the $750,000 they shelled out for the Nato jamboree was needlessly squandered.

The same can be said of General Motors, which also subsidised the champagne celebrations in Washington. One of GM's subsidiaries, Hughes Missile Systems, has been working night and day to keep up with the demand for its best-selling model — the Tomahawk cruise missile. Priced at only $1.4m on the road (any road: its guidance system isn't fussy), this little beauty has been literally flying out of the showroom and on to people's driveways. True, it's a bit thirsty, and you can't get insurance, but it certainly goes like a rocket.

PROTESTERS besieging the United States embassy in Beijing could soon be chanting "We want a refund" — China's secret services have been a notable supporter of Bill Clinton's Democrats.

Democratic fundraiser Johnny Chung told federal investigators that he received $300,000 from the general who runs China's military intelligence to help re-elect Clinton in 1996. So far the FBI has only traced $20,000 of this money in party coffers, and Chung, who pleaded guilty to illegal campaign contributions, may have used the bulk of the cash for himself and his mortgage. Now Clinton's bombers are blowing up their embassies, the Chinese may wonder whether this was money well spent.

Chung visited the White House 50 times and donated some $400,000 to Democrat clauses between 1994 and 1996. He famously offered the Democrats $50,000 in exchange for allowing several Chinese businessmen to visit the Oval Office during a radio address. The party turned down the offer until he sought Hillary Clinton's help and the cheque was accepted. Chung, who once had his photo taken with Clinton and Liu Chao-ying, the daughter of a top-ranking Chinese general at a party fundraiser, said: "I see the White House is like a subway, You have to put in coins to open gates."

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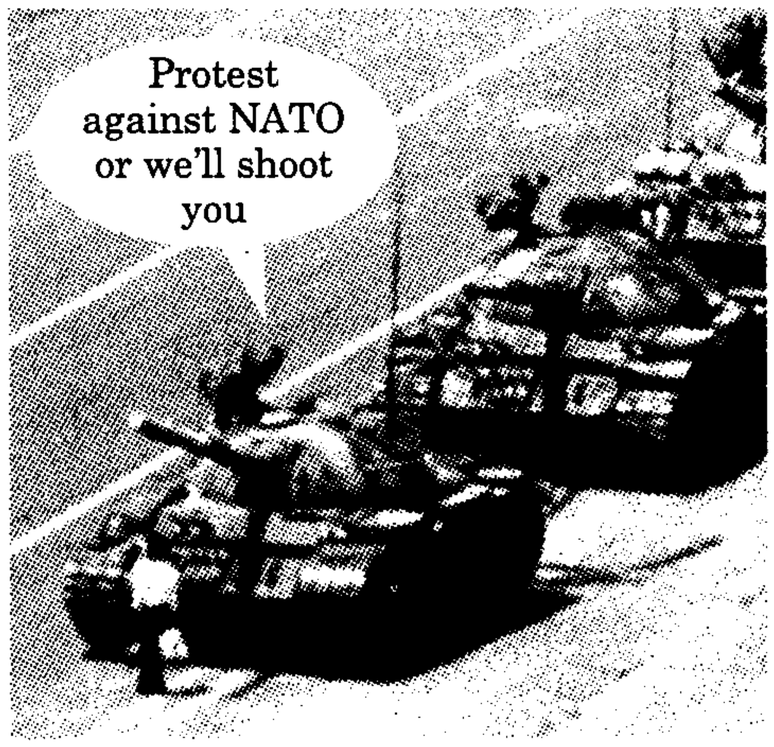
TIANANMEN SQUARE 1999



NEWS

"BOOTH backs legal aid fight" was how the *Times* announced that Refuge, the domestic violence charity of which Cherie Booth QC is a management council member, has joined the queue to knock the lord chancellor's proposals to change the legal aid system.

Refuge believes the new proposals could make it more difficult for victims of domestic abuse to get emergency legal help.

The lord chancellor's office maintains that reform is necessary to stamp out waste and abuse of the system. One such case was 1996's Goodwill v BPAS, where a mother sued the British Pregnancy Advisory Service because her partner's vasectomy had been unsuccessful and she had become pregnant. The case was struck out, but the claimant used legal aid to take it to the court of appeal — where it was once again dismissed.

Lord justice Gibson described the case as "insubstantial" and "manifestly unsustainable", while lord justice Thorpe dismissed it as "far fetched". Margaret Puxon QC held the case up as a prime example of "hopeless cases being brought to trial with the support of legal aid" and "an abuse of the process of the court".

So which brilliant legal mind guided this "vexatious and frivolous" case unsuccessfully through the court at taxpayer's expense? Step forward... Cherie Booth QC.

THE most common refrain of those who believe Mohamed Fayed is just a loveable rogue who should have been given a British passport as soon as he asked for one, is that he has contributed millions to Britain in tax.

Indeed, the People's Pharaoh has been keen to reiterate to anyone who will listen that he forks out "hundreds of millions" to the exchequer each year.

As well as overlooking Fayed's preference for paying in cash, this neglects one fact: the various strands of his Harrods empire are owned by an outfit called "Alfayed Investment and Trust", which the selfless patriot chooses to base in Liechtenstein.

POLICE sergeant Gurpal Virdi, who had charges of racist activity trumped up against him when he complained of similar behaviour by his colleagues in the Met *(Eyes passim)* has finally received news of the next stage of his case.

After Sir Paul Condon, the Met commissioner, received a 700-signature petition demanding action on the case, he ordered that if disciplinary charges were going to be served, they should be served quickly. A hearing will therefore take place at the earliest in September — a full 18 months after Sergeant Virdi's suspension from duty.

Because of this, the Met attempted to have his industrial tribunal postponed until next year, but the request was refused and a preliminary hearing will now take place in August. Meanwhile Paul Boateng has joined the list of home office ministers declining to discuss the case with Peter Bottomley MP. Boateng agreed with colleague Kate Hoey that it would be "inappropriate for me to comment" on the case.

"That's the trouble with targets — they all look the same to me"

THE arrest of David Copeland, the man charged with three murders after the bombing of the Admiral Duncan pub in Soho, helped take the heat off the Metropolitan police, who had angered London's black and Asian communities by initially pooh-poohing the idea that the Brixton bombing could have been racially motivated.

Even such mild-mannered representatives of the ethnic communities as *Eastern Eye*, the newspaper which normally eschews political controversy in favour of "aspirational" pieces on wealthy Asians like Lords Waheed Alli and Swraj Paul on the paper's "rich list"— condemned what was widely seen among Asians as police complacency.

The paper, which accurately predicted that the next attack would be on an Asian area, accused Inspector Knacker of ignoring death threats to Asian businesses in Brick Lane in the days before the second nail bombing, and of negligence – in failing to step up foot patrols and keeping Brick Lane police station closed on the Saturday the bomb went off.

Elsewhere, however, the arrest of Copeland calmed passions. So caught up, for example, was the Lambeth community police consultative group in the mood of praise for the police, that home secretary Jack Straw got an easy ride when he met them in Brixton on Tuesday last week after visiting bomb victims in hospital. There were no awkward questions about stop and search or CS spray.

Even Alex Owolade, black leader of the anti-racist Movement for Justice group, who does little but rant about the abuse of CS, was quiet on the subject during the meeting with Straw. Perhaps he felt he had missed an opportunity, for he later tried to harangue the home secretary on the pavement while he was being interviewed by Channel 4 about Kosovo refugees. One of Straw's security men tried to move Owolade along, until he began screaming "Assault!" This kind of accusation just won't do, post-Macpherson, so it was left to one of the local plods to calm Mr Owolade, a Lambeth council housing officer, down.

PLAIN ENGLISH

"I WASN'T after a great victory, I was after a new working operandi [*sic*] between the Palace and the press office."

— Piers Morgan, editor of the *Mirror*

THE murder of BBC journalist Jill Dando required some last minute rejigging of schedules at her workplace.

On the day after her death new docusoap *A Life of Grime* was scheduled, featuring "post mortem day at the public mortuary, where technicians Paul and John have to cope with some of London's grisly corpses" — inappropriate viewing for a grieving nation.

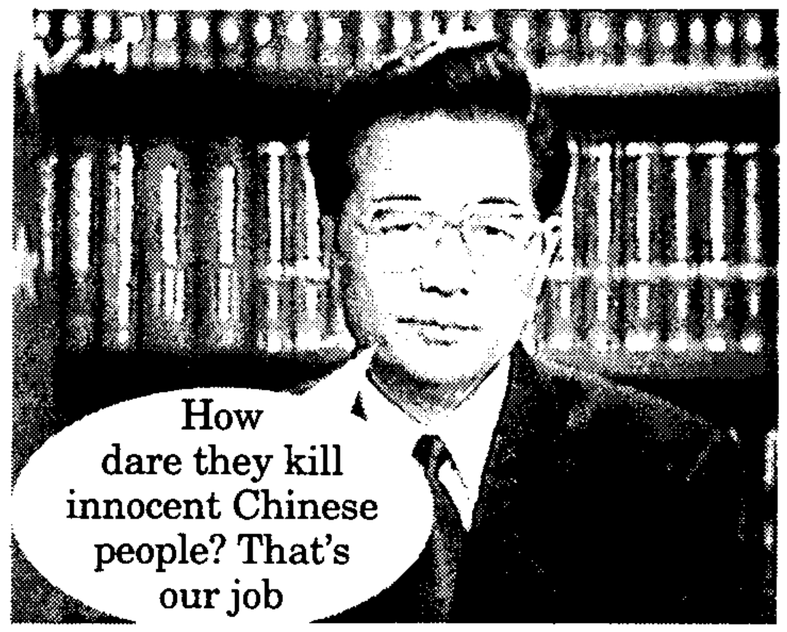
Luckily programmers remembered the previous night's episode of sitcom *The Vicar of Dibley*, which had been pulled to make way for a Dando tribute. This duly ran — complete with a joke where Dawn French's priest, on learning the price of her new stained glass window, exclaims: "£11,000? You could have somebody shot for that!"

NO ONE was more delighted than Carlton when its one-off drama *Goodnight Mr Tom*, the heartwarming story of a shy evacuee adopted by ITV stalwart John Thaw, won the Lew Grade audience award at the BAFTAs.

To top this achievement, its own *Inspector Morse*", starring, er, John Thâw, came third in the phone poll, beaten only by the BBC's *Casualty*. And it must have meant all the more that this was not just some media award, but one voted for by real television viewers — "readers of the *Radio Times*, listeners to BBC local radio and viewers of GMTV".

Oh — and not forgetting employees of Carlton television who responded to a message emailed round the company on the Friday morning before the awards, entitled "get voting please — URGENT". It gave the 0891 numbers for both Carlton nominees, and carried a message, from Sales Manager Evi Nicopoulos: "PLEASE CALL ALL YOUR RELATIVES AND OF COURSE YOURSELF TO VOTE."

THE VICE PRESIDENT SPEAKS OUT



NEXT Thursday the Independent Television Commission (ITC) has to pass judgement on two more dodgy documentaries in Channel 4's *Undercover Britain* series.

ITC chairman Sir Robin Biggam will draw on all his skills as a non-executive director of ethical arms dealers British Aerospace in deciding how much to fine C4 for the phoney arms deals broadcast in its 1996 film, *Guns on the Street*.

This so-called "investigation" of Manchester criminals led to a seven-year prison sentence for one Gary Bispham, even though some programme makers were aware that he wasn't quite the major gun-dealer they had made him out to be, and C4 executives were alerted to this before the trial. Bispham is now appealing his sentence — surely a suitable case for C4's *Clear My Name*, and for certain C4 executives a case of "clear my desk". The last time C4 were up before the ITC, it was fined £150,000 for far less significant offences against the programme code.

One factor in determining the fine may be the undeclared convictions for armed robbery and burglary of on-screen reporter Errol Parkinson. Though the programme-makers knew that he used to break into houses before breaking into television, this was kept from viewers.

The ITC might also bear in mind that this isn't the only instance of *Undercover Britain* reporters committing the offences they were allegedly exposing. Last Christmas C4 put out a timely film naming and shaming Britain's drunk drivers — shortly after its fearless director, Ben Hamilton, had been caught on CCTV snorting cocaine in his car just as he was about to confront one offender. Though Inspector Knacker arrested and cautioned Hamilton, C4 kept his encounter with showbiz sherbet from its viewers.

A third genius from the *Undercover Britain* school of journalism is Graham Hall, who has previous convictions for burglary. These were first exposed by the *Eye* back in 1991, when Hall was working for the *News of the Screws*. After leaving the paper, Hall was taken up by C4 commissioning editor David Lloyd. He has since made six films for the channel, including a recent *Undercover Britain* on fences in Worcester — imaginatively titled *Stolen Goods* — which has caught the ITC's eye.

Although C4 executives knew of Hall's burglary conviction, they kept quiet about it when they transmitted his secretly-recorded conversation with antique dealer Tim Hinks. The Broadcasting Standards Commission has already ruled that C4 was unfair to Hinks, as while acting as a fence he was in fact an informant for West Mercia CID, who at the time were investigating, er, Graham Hall.

The ITC will want answers from C4 and Hall about why his previous association with Hinks over a counterfeit money operation was also kept secret from the viewers. In 1994, while under CID instructions, Hinks gave Hall £8,000 to buy fake £20 notes, but the money has never been recovered.

There are other skeletons in the Hall cupboard. In 1992, a court ordered him to repay £10,000 belonging to an animal charity, which he claimed had been stolen from his car. International Animal Rescue had lent him the cash as "flash money" for an undercover investigation of the cruel transport of veal-calves. To date, Hall has repaid less than £100. Can it be that Channel 4 isn't paying its intrepid investigator properly? No doubt they will want to rectify this following Hall's triumph last weekend. He won the Bafta for best news and current affairs programme.

Street Of Shame

IN the *Mirror*, otherwise known as Mohamed Fayed's parish magazine, Brian Hitchen seethes and rants at the outrageous refusal of the government to give the Phoney Pharaoh a fugging passport. "The man deserves it," he splutters. "It's as simple as that. And if the establishment and those toadying columnists don't like it, then to hell with them."

Presumably this cannot be the same Brian Hitchen on whom Margaret Thatcher bestowed the CBE in 1990 for his own shameless toadying towards her in his *Daily Star* column. In his paean of praise to Fayed, Hitchen also neglects to mention that he has been a frequent recipient of the Harrods boss's hospitality.

Anyone wishing to hear more of Hitchen's amusing opinions can listen to him every Sunday during the breakfast show on Liberty Radio — which happens to be owned by one M. Fayed.

CEREBRAL *Mirror* editor Piers "Gormless" Morgan has been engaged in delicate discussions with his Irish supremo Craig Mackenzie, aka the Bouncing Bog Brush, following the discovery that one of their reporters has become rather too intimate with the newly-anointed priest Sinead O'Connor.

Neil Michael, the man with the weirdest hair in journalism (apart from Mackenzie himself), was despatched to Dublin last year to keep track of the city's delirious music scene. Alas, he has taken investigative journalism to levels undreamed of by Morgan who succeeded only in getting quotes out of Paul Gascoigne's wife, Sheryl. Neil Michael is not the only man to have had an affair with a Catholic priest, but he is certainly the first to do so with a female Father. Vicious carping by his rivals has raised questions about the 11 "exclusives" on O'Connor which have appeared in the *Mirror* over the past month — not to mention the expenses which Michael clocked up while accompanying her to Lourdes for the historic ordination, followed by a seemingly endless circuit of Ireland explaining her new vocation.

Mackenzie, who is supposed to be in charge of all the *Mirror*'s Irish operations from his glam HQ in a Belfast industrial estate, was apparently unaware of his hack's relationship with The Artist Formerly Known As Sinead (who now styles herself Mother Bernadette Mary)..His reaction, after learning that TAFKAS had brought Neil Michael to the RTE studios where she proudly introduced him as her lover, was predictably voluble.

Mackenzie and Morgan have imposed a news blackout, ordering that all *Mirror* hacks (including Michael) should refuse to talk to colleagues from other papers about the relationship. But in one of Michael's articles he quoted Mother Bernadette Mary as saying that her anonymous boyfriend (i.e. himself) was "not completely happy" with the concept of priestly celibacy.

THE Financial Mail on Sunday's front page on 25 April was emphatic. "Bradford and Bingley, the UK's second-largest building society, will reveal a landmark victory tomorrow in its battle against flotation. It will announce the failure of moves to force it to become a bank," wrote Jeff Prestridge.

He outlined the delight of "B&B insiders" and quoted an "elated source at the society" trumpeting the news. The source was presumably rather less elated the next day when the Bradford and Bingley... announced that it would be, er, turning into a bank after 62 percent of its members voted in favour of the move.

Still, Prestridge and colleagues at the *FMoS* can comfort themselves with memories of their last big scoop — that Mohamed Fayed had put Harrods on the market for £1.5bn. Unfortunately that turned out not to be true either and the paper is now being sued by that guardian of truth, the Phoney Pharaoh.

MELANIE PHILLIPS, stern champion of family values, remains defiant — if not downright hysterical — in her support for the adulterous Chris Woodhead.

Following our revelation in the last *Eye* that Melanie and Chris enjoy regular sessions at Highgrove advising Prince Charles on education, a reader wrote to her suggesting that this connection ought to be mentioned the next time she launches a salvo against Cathy Woodhead in the *Sunday Times*. He also wondered why la Phillips chooses to attack a deserted wife, who was left literally holding the baby, rather than the errant and dishonest husband. Could it be, he wondered, that "the seduction of young girls by men in positions of authority is only reprehensible when you disagree with them politically"?

Back came Melanie's reply. "Your message is as venomous as it is ignorant. Since you have chosen to believe the disgusting innuendo written about me, it is clear you will believe any old rubbish that suits your own prejudices about people you know nothing about. Your grasp of what 'proof' means is risible. You grossly misrepresented what I have written; presumably you don't understand it. Your comments are therefore worthless."

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Who is responsible for the tide of trivia [in the *Guardian*'s G2 section]? Step forward ambitious features editor Ian Katz; an amiable chap, but not someone you would want on your side in the pub quiz team."

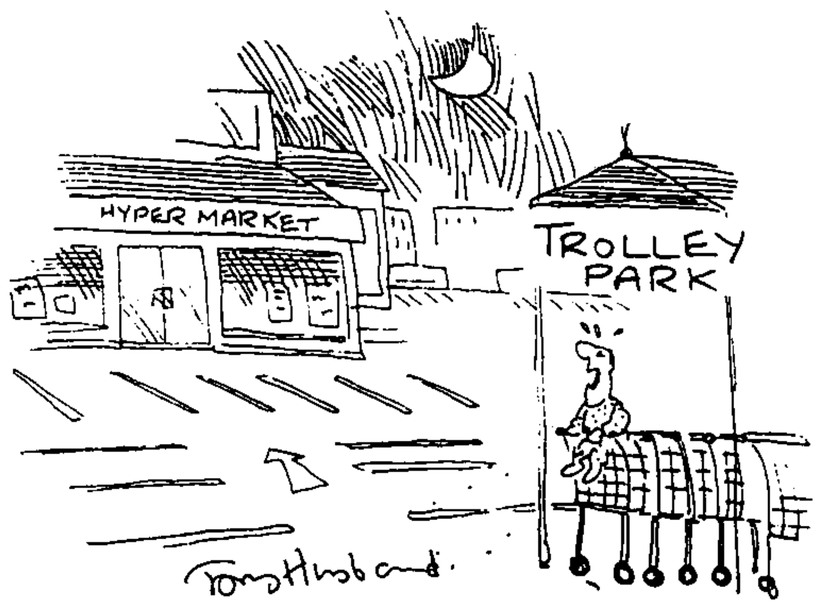
— *Eye* 974, 16 April

"How to become a pub quiz genius."

— G2 headline, 26 April

"In our look at the pub quiz, pages 2 and 3, G2, April 26, we gave an answer to the question, when was Thomas a Becket killed?, but got it wrong. He died in 1170, not 1154."

— *Guardian*



FORGET the Scottish parliament. What has really gripped imaginations north of the border in recent months has been the chance for an entire primary school to win a trip to Disney World in Florida, courtesy of the *Daily Record* and *Sunday Mail*.

As an ecstatic headline in the *Record* announced: "THE WORLD'S BIGGEST SCHOOL TRIP EVER! IT DISNEY GET ANY BETTER THAN THIS."

Tokens were printed daily, and the prize would go to the school which collected the most tokens per pupil. Thus children all over Scotland badgered their mums and dads to buy extra copies of the Mirror Group rags. And it worked: for what parents would wish to deprive their little darlings of a trip to the magic kingdom? No fewer than 1,654 schools took part, collecting more than 211 million tokens and hugely boosting Mirror Group revenues.

The only debit was the cost of sending 200 schoolchildren off to Florida. Finally, the great day dawned when editor-in-chief Martin Clarke announced the winner. It was the tiny Torridon primary school in Ross-shire — which has, er, just four pupils. So much for "the biggest school trip ever".

Outraged parents and teachers jammed the *Record*'s switchboard. Terrified of losing all his readers overnight, Clarke hastily announced at the Glasgow prize-giving ceremony that some runners-up could go too. Lavish McTavish, eh? Not quite: thanks to the paper's cunning calculation of "tokens-per-pupil ratios", most of the other lucky schools were almost as tiny as Torridon, or even tinier. One, from the remote Isle of Canna, had just two pupils.

Still, if the *Record* is to be believed, there was national rejoicing. "Martin Clarke triggered the biggest cheer Scotland has heard in years," it reported the next day. "A huge cheer welled up and crashed out the open doors into the spring sunshine. Teachers burst into tears as their tiny charges rushed over to drape their little arms round them."

The tear-stained head-teacher of Torridon told the paper: "We've had a wonderful day. The girls met Charles Kennedy MP on the train down and he wished them luck and posed for a photo." Charles Kennedy *and* Mickey Mouse: it disney get more grandy and dandy than this.

IN THE last *Eye* Ed Horton wondered whether he was alone in stopping buying the *Guardian* on Saturday because of the presence of Julie Burchill. Correspondence received at the *Eye* would suggest he is not — around 70 percent of those moved to write are also weekend boycotters.

Among her fans, reasons given for actively seeking out the weekend *Grauniad* include "so that my friends and I can laugh uproariously at her lame attempt at journalism" (Peter Crowe); and because "she's a gifted, compulsive phrase-maker with balls as big as a pawnbroker's stallion" (L.M. Nottingham).

Among those avoiding such balls are Matthew Chancellor and Helen Stringer, both of whom buy the Saturday *Guardian*, cut out Burchill's column and return it to the editor. He is a more suitable addressee for any further correspondence.

THERE was a rare display of common sense at Kingston crown court when Judge Charles Elly decided not to jail 24-year-old Tara Clancy for going through four weddings to illegal immigrants at £1500 a groom to feed what her brief described as a "voracious" crack cocaine habit. Her co-accused, however, was sent down for four years.

Since wayward youngsters are regularly imprisoned for much less serious offences, one might have expected the *Sun* to take a dim view of the judge's leniency. Yet although the story had all the necessary ingredients — an attractive, fallen middle-class girl, illegal immigrants and hard drugs — the increasingly soggy Currant Bun ignored it. The *Daily Mail*, by contrast, gave it half a page plus a photo.

One explanation might be that although Tara was described in court as a "hotel receptionist" — which no doubt accurately reflects her current employment — ex-colleagues remember her better as a music writer for the *Sun*, an enviable position which was of course entirely unrelated to the fact that her father, Paddy Clancy, is in charge of the paper's Irish operations.

Now that the *Sun* has set a precedent in not demanding that drug-fiends be strung up (or even written about), can we assume that others — like gullible *Blue Peter* presenters or hapless rock stars — will benefit from this new liberal stance?

FORMER *Sun* chief sports photographer Roger Parker is celebrating a triple victory over his ex-employers after News International made a humiliating climbdown to avoid an embarrassing high court case.

Parker was sacked in May 1994 on trumped-up charges of stealing film and fiddling his expenses.

The truth was that at 51, Parker, who had worked from the paper for 20 years, was considered too old by the *Sun*'s then managing editor Bill Newman.

The chief piece of evidence against Parker was a list of the amounts of film issued to the paper's snappers which purported to show that Parker was "using" far more rolls than his colleagues — the implication being that he was on the fiddle. The fatal flaw in this piece of evidence was that, on crucial dates when Parker was supposed to have been dishonestly helping himself to the *Sun*'s film, he was actually on holiday in Florida with his wife and had restaurant receipts, hotel bills, golf scorecards, etc, etc, to prove it.

Parker won an Acas arbitration hearing in 1996 and an industrial tribunal in 1997, then began the long process of suing the *Sun* for £61,000 for breach of contract. The case was due to start on Monday 10 May. Despite not having a leg to stand on, News International dragged the matter out until the last minute, finally paying a sum into court sufficient to satisfy Parker. The case is estimated to have cost the *Sun* around £200,000 including legal costs.

And what of Parker's chief adversary, Bill Newman? He is now the *Sun*'s ombudsman, in charge of handling readers' complaints and upholding the *Sun*'s reputation for decency and fair play!

THE Fat Controller — aka deputy prime minister John Prescott — has been fulminating against a Labour-Lib Dem coalition in Scotland. But silly John must have known this is what Tony Blair wanted all along and what Donald Dewar was preparing the ground for as he repeatedly played down the scale of Labour's likely victory for the new Holyrood parliament prior to the polls' closing.

No sooner had the polls closed than the prime minister was on the phone to Paddy Ashdown to sort out the coalition deal, which will inevitably mean the Liberal Democrats' bone-crunchingly boring but worthy leader Jim Wallace asking for very little and getting even less — apart from ensuring that he parks his own backside on the ministerial benches.

On second thoughts perhaps John was not being so silly after all: his invective against the Lib Dems will further endear him to his own party, especially in those northern cities smarting from recent Lib Dem advances. He will also please the bulk of Labourites who don't much like the look of proportional representation and coalition in practice. Along with Gordon Brown and Jack Straw, Prescott is determined that PR shouldn't catch on at Westminster because without it, Blair's hope for a "realignment" in British politics, post-Pantsdown, with the Lib Dems is doomed.

LABOUR's pisspoor performance in the Wales assembly elections was underlined by the fact that Alun Michael only managed to gain a seat in the top-up seats section, which under proportional representation compensated the party for doing so badly in the first past the post main round.

Meanwhile an early casualty of the Plaid Cymru surge was Shane Williams, Labour candidate for the once rock solid Islwyn, once represented by the Welsh Windbag himself, Neil Kinnock. Williams, a researcher for Islwyn MP Don Touhig, apparently paid the price for his master's legendary fixing abilities. For Touhig presided over the court of the star chamber selection board for Labour's Welsh candidates, purging off-message types at will. Williams may be bitter once he realises Don fixed him into the bargain.

THE self-proclaimed "midwife to the Welsh assembly", former Liberal-turned-lobbyist Leighton Andrews, threw a grand thrash at Cardiff's Park Hotel for the great and the good of the Welsh Labour party as the dire assembly results poured in.

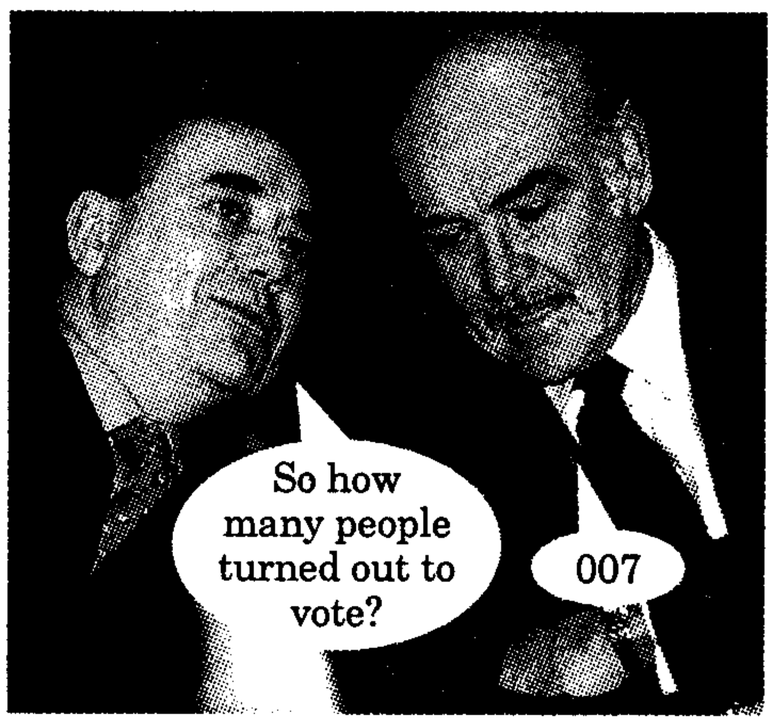
Andrews, a former lobbyist for Saatchi off-shoot Rowland, Salingbury Casey, and subsequently head of corporate affairs at the BBC, founded the "Yes for Wales Campaign" with junior Welsh office minister Peter Hain. But Labour's night of sorrows could hold new possibilities for the bumptious name dropper, who gained a place on housing quango Tai Cymru courtesy of former Welsh secretary William Hague and who runs lobbying companies Political Context and Welsh Context with Huw Roberts. (Roberts is a former special adviser to another former Welsh secretary, Ron "park life" Davies.)

Andrews' friendship with Hain goes back to student days when both were active Young Liberals. Andrews was elected vice-president of NUS on the Liberal ticket. Now that Labour will depend on Liberal support to run the new assembly, the two former Liberals turned "new" Labour, Andrews and Hain may be just the men to smooth over those rough edges with the ever suspicious Taffia.

PS: Leighton Andrews has been busy. He has authored a likely blockbuster *Wales Says Yes*, with a foreword by, er, Peter Hain. Andrews' soaring intellect is demonstrated by the following from a deep and meaningful chapter entitled "The birth of post-devolution politics".

"There are radical Britishnesses as well as imperial Britishnesses," writes Andrews. "If Britishness is a historical construct, then we have a part in its construction. Britain is now and always has been now. Britain is an artefact that the British produce. The British make and remake Britain day by day and year by year. If they want to. If we want Britain, we will have to make Britain".

SCOTLAND'S DAY OF DESTINY



BROWN-NOSING lobby hacks who are used to taking down whispered tittle-tattle from Downing Street press officers anxious to ensure that Ken Livingstone gets nowhere near London's mayoral chains will have to think up their own stories and write them down in big joined-up writing now that Number 10 has given up bad mouthing the People's Ken.

But this is not because they (and Tony Blair) have gone soft on Ken — far from it. It is just that they have finally worked out that Leninspart might not be such a threat to civilisation if every other likely Labour member of the new Greater London Authority should by chance prove to be a reliable clone of Tony's.

Lo and behold all lefties have been purged even before they reach the selection board by humourless apparatchiks at London Labour's Charles Square HQ. Since Leninspart has already agreed to work with a Blairite deputy should he be elected, he could find himself in a minority of one on the new authority.

MORE on the increasingly erratic behaviour of international development secretary Clare Short, who tried (unsuccessfully) to stop the influential international development select committee visit to Kosovar refugee camps in Macedonia (see last *Eye*).

On their return, committee chairman Bowen Wells and members Andrew Robathan, Tessa Kingham and Anne Clwyd summoned Short before the committee to relay its findings. But Short was in no mood for pleasantries, announcing on her arrival that she would have to depart shortly, because "I have just returned from Washington, and like all of us, have a lot to do".

When Labour MPs Kingham and Clwyd asked what the British government intended to do to relieve the enormous pressures on Macedonia caused by the influx of refugees, Short resorted to "Golden Elephants" mode, moaning that the Macedonians had been making similar claims "from the beginning". A clearly irritable Short then rounded on Clwyd for "having her own agenda", before calling it a day.

Sadly for Short and home secretary Jack Straw — whose policy towards Kosovar refugees was criticised by the United Nations high commission for refugees as "inadequate" — they had not reckoned on the Dear Leader flying to Macedonia, nor on Cherie Blair's tearful response on seeing the hordes of misplaced humanity. Once back in Downing Street, the People's Tony announced his stupendous U-turn on refugee numbers: 1,000 people a week could come, and perhaps as many as 50,000 could eventually find sanctuary. Short and Straw will be hopping mad that Tony changed policy without telling them — but not half as mad as Bowen Wells and his select committee.

REBEL MP Denis Canavan romped home to the Scottish parliament as an independent, standing against "new" Labour in the Falkirk constituency that was prevented by the Millbank Tendency from choosing him in the first place.

Canavan, who was busy campaigning for devolution at a time when most of the Labour frontbench was against it, can take particular delight that the chairman of the original Labour selection board which dropped him was none other than Dundee West MP Ernie Ross.

In recent years "wee" Ernie has undergone something of a Blairey makeover, but it still came as a dreadful surprise to learn that the "wee" Ernie was the one fingered for leaking unpublished reports on the arms to Sierra Leone affair from the foreign affairs select committee, of which he was a member, to Robin Cook. Not that "wee" Ernie will have any trouble getting selected for anything in the future.

Dear Elector

I am married to Susie and live locally. aged 38, I have a rural background, having lied in the area for over 35 years.

Conservative Party Literature

ONCE again the Tories have demonstrated that they have their finger on Britain's pulse, with the glamorous Alan Duncan, junior health shadow, in devastating form during recent health questions in the Commons.

Duncan asked: "The government have done nothing to prepare people for the dangers of August's solar eclipse. Will the secretary of state guarantee that he will implement a programme to inform people in schools and elsewhere about how to look after their eyes when they are tempted to stare at the sun?"

With only three months to go health secretary Frank Dobson clearly has his priorities wrong.

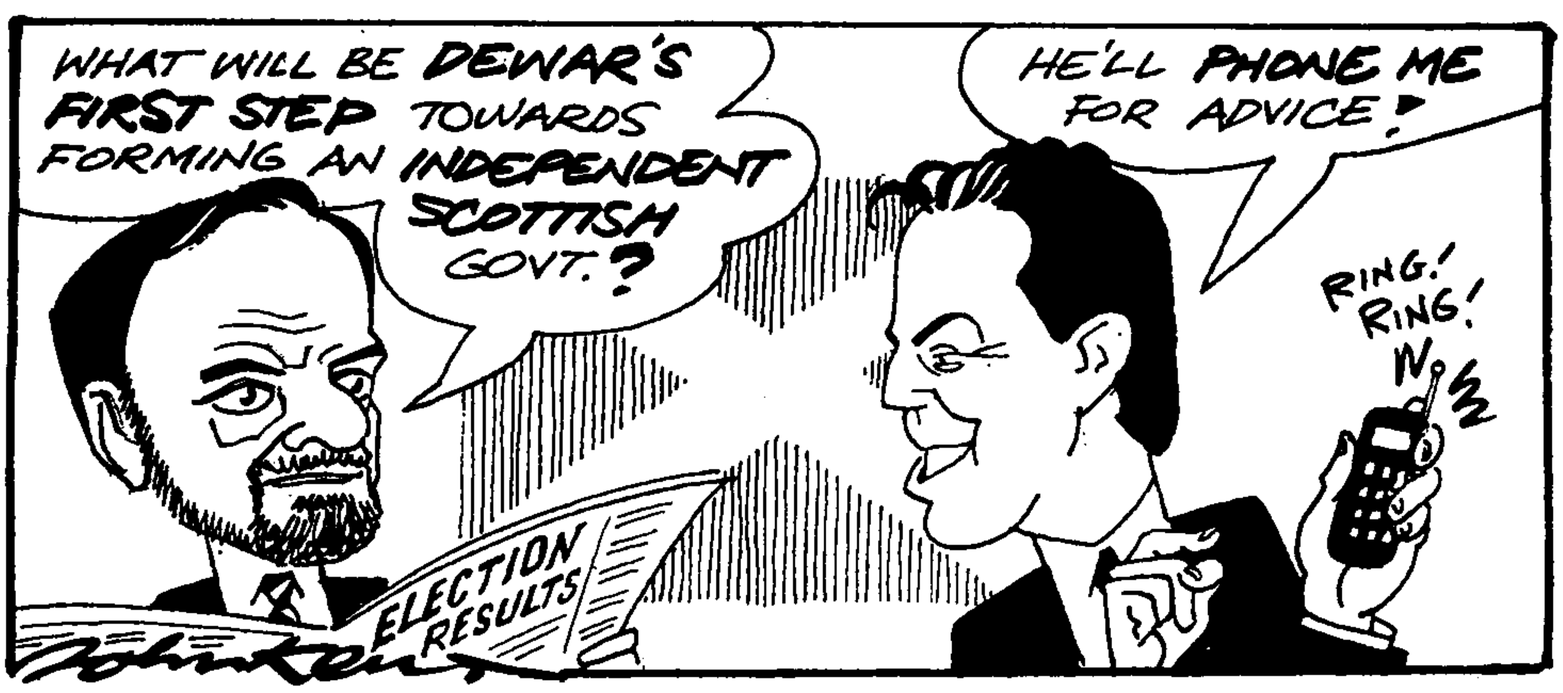
THE *Spitting Image* joke about Mrs Thatcher and the vegetables ("They'll have the same as me") is now accepted as historical fact — by one old member of her cabinet at least.

Seeking to enliven his degree day speech to graduates of Anglia Polytechnic University, of which he's chancellor, Lord — formerly Jim — Prior decided to tell the story, which according to the ex-agriculture minister, actually happened.

Unfortunately he cocked the story up good and proper, leading up to the punchline (and simultaneously killing it) with "And the waiter said, `What will the vegetables have?' "

Not to be denied his big laugh, however, Jim hooted gamely: "And I was one of those vegetables!"

He is now, it seems.

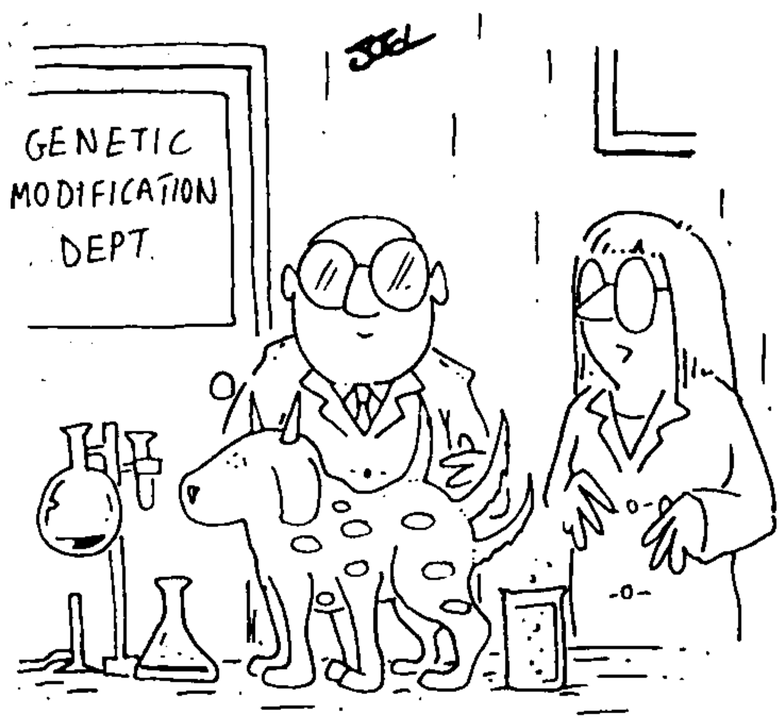

WHAT WILL BE DEWAR'S FIRST STEP TOWARDS FORMING AN INDEPENDENT SCOTTISH GOVT.?
HE'LL PHONE ME FOR ADVICE!
RING! RING!
ELECTION RESULTS

IN THE run-up to the elections for the Welsh assembly, Tony Blair's curate in the principality, Alun Michael, was keen to impress his credentials as a true son of the valleys.

Demonstrating his fluency in Welsh, he told *Frost on Sunday* that "to me, *hyder* is the most important Welsh word".

Presumably he meant *hyder* meaning "confidence" or "trust", rather than "Hyder", the giant Welsh utilities firm which has trousered government contracts for such diverse projects as road building, NHS computer services and school building under the private finance initiative (PFI) since "new" Labour came to power, and is currently lobbying to be allowed to raise tariffs on its water supply wing.

Still, Hyder boss Graham Hawker, a member of the Welsh "New Deal" task force, will probably be grateful for his chum's subliminal plug.



"You spoil that dog"

Number crunchings

30%

■ in the local elections is a reason for William Hague to rejoice

-30%

■ for his personal approval rating is a reason for him not to

A DISCREET notice in the *Times* states that "The Fellows of Eton College are pleased to announce that The Queen has approved the appointment of Dr Eric Anderson to be Provost of Eton in succession to Sir Antony Acland who will retire in the summer of the year 2000."

Pressure of space prevents the paper noting that the provost of Eton is nominated by the prime minister, who himself attended Fettes College. Dr Anderson, as it happens, was a housemaster at Fettes in the years 1967-70, where he made such a good impression on the young Master Tony that Blair nominated him as "the teacher who influenced me most" in a TV ad aimed at recruiting teachers a couple of years ago.

Moral for teachers: be nice to the little brats — you never know if one of them is going to end up as PM one day!

JUST FANCY THAT!

"And if the ground troops go in, this is how they'll do it..."

— Reporter from ABC Eyewitness News, *Los Angeles, watching rehearsal of US marines landing on golden Californian beach*

(Geographical Note: Kosovo doesn't have any beaches — it's landlocked, but do the Americans know this?)

GOVERNMENT opposition to an elected House of Lords may have nothing to do with democracy and everything to do with... money.

An unofficial group of top mandarins, working from Jack Cunningham's cabinet office, has come up with projected running costs for the revised chamber that have so rattled treasury officials a copy of the findings has been placed directly in Gordon Brown's in-tray.

To Brown's dismay the working group takes as seriously as the government the threat that the Wakeham committee on Lords reform will opt for a fully-elected house. And it will cost.

Relatively speaking, Britain currently gets its peers on the cheap. An ordinary peer can pocket a daily allowance of £78 for turning up (no need to stay) and £34.50 for a bite to eat; while £33.50 daily is available for secretarial help — but only in exceptional circumstances. Everything else they pay for themselves, even down to postage stamps.

A peer turning up regularly during an average 150-day year can only expect to pocket about £15,000. Small beer when the chief flunky, clerk to the parliaments and head of Lords administration John Davies, collects £116,045 a year. Mind you, he has to turn up every day *and* stay awake.

The working group concedes that elected peers (or "senators") would have to be paid 75 percent of an MP's salary and allowances — the lower figure reflects an anticipated capping of senators' powers and "maintains the dignity of the Commons".

Thus post-Wakeham a senator would get a salary of £33,800 (no need to turn up, let alone stay), secretarial and research allowances of £36,924 and an additional costs allowance (such as providing spouse/secretary with a pension) of £9,538. Multiply this by the anticipated figure of 500 senators and you get £40.1m.

In 1997/8 *total* House of Lords expenditure was only £25.6m. That included all staff salaries and pensions, security and administration. Peers' costs accounted for just £6.7m — 26 per cent of the total.

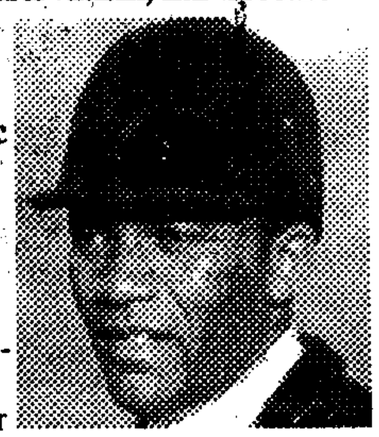
The new £40m figure will be swelled further by ministerial salaries and senators' pension costs. Add on the luxuries of free first class postage, rail and air travel and generous mileage allowances to bring senators into line with MPs, and the cost of the second chamber spirals higher. And that ain't all.

Elected peers will need offices, something only a handful of ministerial and ceremonial peers have now. The working group suggests a temporary solution would be to house senators in spare government buildings at Elephant and Castle, with a privileged few in post-devolution spare rooms at the Scottish and Welsh offices in Whitehall. Temporary conversion costs are difficult to gauge but are being put at £15m-£20m. Meanwhile, Welsh and Scottish devolution isn't coming cheap either. From 15 June the average Scot will have 18 people looking after his democratic rights: 1 councillor, 1 MP, 1 MSP, seven further MSPs drawn from the party lists, and eight MEPs, also from party lists. The taxpayer funds all but one of these. The Northern Ireland assembly has so far managed to meet on just 16 occasions — at a cost of £10.7m to the taxpayer. Add to these the costs of new buildings and refurbishing old ones and you can see why leaving the peers well alone might have been the prudent option. Too late, alas, Gordon.

'Backbiter'

MAN IN THE EYE

DEREK LAUD, one of the gaudiest characters in the camp subculture of Conservatism, has become the first black master of foxhounds in Britain. But the ecstatic front-page coverage which this historic event received in the *Daily Telegraph* omitted certain exotic details from the new master's CV.



Laud, former managing director of scandal-hit lobbying firm Ludgate Laud, was due to contest Tottenham for the Tories at the 1997 general election but withdrew two months before polling day following charges of drunk-driving in America. Almost immediately afterwards, the *Observer* revealed that he had been at the centre of what was effectively an honours-selling racket. Working closely with backbench Tory MP Sir Michael Grylls, Laud had tried to fix honours for two of his clients, John Beckwith and Jeff Whalley, who had both made substantial donations to Conservative party funds.

Millionaire property developer Beckwith, father of It-girl Tamara, was awarded the MBE in 1996. He and Laud had organised the Premier Club, which collected thousands of pounds from business tycoons in return for the dubious pleasure of dinners with ministers, some at Downing Street. Whalley, head of a Yorkshire engineering firm, arranged several large donations to the Tories via Laud, who then persuaded Grylls to write to party chairman Brian Mawhinney recommending the generous tyke for a knighthood. Whalley also offered to provide "financial assistance" to Neil Hamilton.

Grylls, whose affectionate nickname for his black chum was "Golly", later joined Hamilton in the sleaze sin-bin after failing to declare payments from parliamentary lobbyist Ian Greer, another leading figure in the Tories' gay mafia.

There was yet more embarrassment for Laud when it transpired that he had been rather economical with the actualite in his CV while applying for a parliamentary nomination. The untruths began with the date of birth: 1962 according to the CV, 1964 in reality. Most people take years off their age rather than adding them on — unless, of course, they are troubled by the age of consent for homosexual activity.

Also missing from later versions of the CV was Laud's first professional experience at Westminster, as research assistant to his flatmate Michael Brown MP, who resigned as a government whip in 1994 after the *News of the World* published a lurid article about his sex-life. (Brown also received undeclared "commission payments" from Ian Greer for his work on behalf of US Tobacco and its unsavoury product Skoal Bandits.) Another of Laud's close friends, Harvey Proctor, was forced out of the Commons in 1987 after being convicted of "gross indecency" with rent boys.

Nothing about Derek Laud is quite what it seems. Although friends were led to believe that he was the son of a wealthy Jamaican diplomat, educated at Shrewsbury and Cambridge, in fact he was born on a Battersea council estate, son of a labourer and an assistant in an old people's home. Other aspirant politicians might be proud of such a background, but Laud apparently feared that it would count against him in the snooty circles he now inhabited. By the time he arrived at Westminster as a teenage protégé of Michael Brown, he had already acquired an extravagant upper-class accent. ("That boy's dad must have eaten a *very* posh missionary," one MP commented.)

While working as a lobbyist he listed himself in Debrett's as "Derek Laud Esq., House of Commons, SW1A 0AA", though he had no parliamentary position. Even the parking space at Westminster that he used for his chauffeur-driven Mercedes actually belonged to one of his young employees at Ludgate Laud, the Earl of Hardwicke — who was disgraced last September when he tried to sell cocaine to an undercover hack from the *News of the World*.

Members of the New Forest Foxhounds, eager to prove their anti-racist credentials, have been boasting that they are oblivious to the new master's skin colour. So, one might add, is he: Laud used to be secretary of the far-right Monday Club, which supported repatriation for black people, and in 1990 he organised trips to South Africa on behalf of Strategy Network International, a pro-apartheid lobbying company.

Will Laud's latest reinvention, as a tally-ho country gent, prove any less embarrassing than his previous incarnations?

TV

Counterblast: Harold Pinter (BBC2)

The Reith Lectures 1999 (Radio 4)

THE number one cliche for fogeys who think the BBC was better in the past is to lament the decline of the *talk*. In its early days, the corporation had a department called Talks. In novels and plays of the 1950s, a character was often established as dull but intelligent and with integrity by the simple line: "He's a Talks producer at the BBC."

To mark anniversaries, the BBC still broadcasts old talks by Orwell, T.S. Eliot or others who would occasionally leave typewriter for microphone. Letters to the *Daily Telegraph* on the failure of radio presenters to sound the 'n' in government or the 'l' in vulnerable will frequently conclude with a call for the return of the Talk.

Well, the Talk is still with us but recent examples on television and radio raise doubts about its validity in an age in which the term Talk Radio denotes a form of broadcasting which would be unlikely to find a slot for T.S. Eliot. Radio 4's **Reith Lectures** — the last stable for this old nag of a format — were delivered this year by Anthony Giddens, academic John the Baptist to Tony Blair's Jesus-as-PM. Giddens aimed to give us the underlying principles of Blairism. And on BBC2's **Counterblast**, Harold Pinter turned from playwriting to self-dramatisation to deliver a rant against Nato's Balkans campaign.

Both modern Talks faltered in both form and content. The tradition of the broadcast lecture depended on the idea that they would deliver thoughts which the viewer or listener would not have heard or had before. But Giddens merely mouths familiar Third Way waffle — "Democracy is perhaps the most powerful energising idea of the twentieth century. There are few states in the world that don't call themselves democratic" — and it is no consolation that he probably (or, as he would say, "perhaps") thought of it first.

And isn't a lecture in favour of democracy a bit too easy? Maybe next year Delia Smith could be called upon to deliver next year's speeches: "In these talks, I shall be arguing in favour of two ancient but still, I think, also modern concepts: Motherhood and Apple Pie." Wouldn't a talk on the perils of democracy (which Brian Walden addressed in his recent BBC2 lectures on tyrants) at least have made the listener sit up in their armchair?

Equally, *Counterblast*'s choice of Pinter — looking more than ever like an actor auditioning for the role of Big Brother in a production of 1984 — to deliver his familiar Americaphobic baritone soliloquy

highlights the BBC's old-fashioned interpretation of dissent. In a recent newspaper article, the historian Andrew Roberts argued that a nuclear weapon should be used against the Serbians. This argument may have been immoral, illogical and bonkers but it was genuinely provocative and original and a "counterblast" against prevailing majority opinion. Pinter was merely a recognised critic of American military action ranting against the latest example. His rhetoric has no effect because it's so expected.

And both programmes show a technical restlessness which suggests that producers no longer trust the form of the Talk. Rather than simply placed at a microphone like the great wireless lecturers of the past, Giddens was flown to Washington, Delhi and other international capitals. Each talk was hosted by a BBC presenter and the lecture gave way to a question-and-answer session, a device usually used to include ordinary people but which in this case brought soft lobs from a Mr T. Blair of Westminster and a Mrs H. Rodham Clinton from DC.

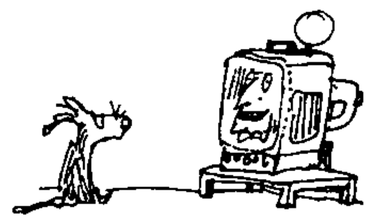
The Pinter television address was equally in denial about its style. The raging playwright was never permitted to speak directly to camera for longer than a newsreader would be. At the end of a sentence, we cut to either archive footage from the war or a pundit interviewed in their living room offering a sound-bite in support of Pinter's thesis. Yet these people — Denis Healey, Mark Almond — have said these same things in this same way on countless news programmes. What was the point of having them again? Surely the programme should have rested on Pinter's views alone.

But the main problem with the Talk is that it belonged to a culture in which print journalism and academia — the two forms to which it is closest — had not become the mass providers of opinion which they have been since the seventies. When Talks were a staple of the airwaves, newspapers were dominated by fact and suspicious of punditry. These days, most high-profile academics, historians and writers can deliver their opinions in almost any newspaper or magazine they choose. Pinter and Giddens already had published the majority of their arguments.

And the second justification for the Talk was a paternalistic interpretation by the BBC of its charter promise to "educate" the nation. Talks were lectures for listeners who would never get to sit in tiered seating with a hangover. But, now, at least until student loans have their effect, virtually everyone in the BBC2/Radio 4 target audience has had at least three years of lectures and probably doesn't want any more. To adapt Bob Hoskins's famous commercial, the non-commercial channels are proving that it's not always good to Talk.

'Square Eyes'

MEDIA NEWS



FOLLOWING the murder of Jill Dando, the notoriously relaxed security officers at the BBC's Stage Six and White City premises have been put on "high alert".

After a series of hurried briefings from Inspector Knacker, new procedures will be adopted by front-line personnel, namely those working in reception areas. The days when producers could leave VHS copies of their programmes at reception to be called for by their editors have ended. Thanks to "new intelligence" (ie, a quick look at Sunday newspaper reports about Serbian hit-squads), Security has been told that bombs invariably come in VHS-shaped containers and for "obvious reasons" reception can no longer accept this sort of parcel.

So now tapes/bombs can only be collected from the poor sods who cower in the main despatch area, a mere 30 yards from the new Serb-proof cordon sanitaire.

"WHEN the Soho bomb exploded last Friday, Trevor Taylor, producer of *Gardener's Question Time*, was in a bar just yards away," ran a breathless piece in *Pravdariel*, the Beeb's propaganda rag.

Written by Trevor himself, it was a no-holds-barred account of how he handled his hour of crisis — and just the sort of article that makes the average *Ariel* reader reach for the sick bag.

"Assistant Producer Jo King and I were waiting to meet colleagues from Radio Five Live in the Groucho Club. All that changed in a split second," Trev records at the start of his full-page account of how fantastic he was at reporting so much horror. He might have been "just yards away" from the blast, but as other hacks covering the story soon learned, he was still able to function as a normal human being amid the carnage. "My aim was simple, just to tip off the newsroom as fast as possible." And like anyone else close to a terrorist bombing, he records that he "felt professional pride that the newsroom knew of the bomb less than a minute after its detonation", even while some of those just yards away were bleeding to death.

Leaving the safety of the Groucho Club and at great personal risk, Trev describes the horror of what he saw in two entire paragraphs. Happily, there was more space to remind readers that he was able to borrow a mobile phone and carry on the good work: "No sooner had I got through than I was on air with the first eye-witness report. Within about five minutes of the explosion, Radio Five Live listeners were receiving the first live reports from the scene."

Despite the "bloody injuries" and "fears of a second device", our Trevor was still able to carry on: "No sooner had I finished with Radio Five Live than BBC One's Nine O'Clock News called."

The thought that such wicked violence might erupt so close to the Groucho Club could, of course, distress some *Ariel* subscribers. Happily our Trevor chose to end his article with an uplifting image of journalistic triumph instead: "We never did meet up with our 5 Live colleagues, but we're sure if they were listening or watching they would have approved."

CRIMEWATCH SPECIAL

Haven't-A-Cluedo

THERE was much to be said about the murder of Jill Dando. And Fleet Street's finest rose to the challenge of saying it, displaying the talents for which they are admired throughout the world...

Inside Knowledge

"I didn't know Miss Dando. Nor had I often seen her on TV. But, through newspaper and magazine articles, she was 'family' in the modern sense." — Peter McKay, Daily Mail.

"I did meet and work with Jill Dando more than once over the years." — James Whitaker, Mirror.

"I didn't know Jill. We never met... Now I'm just sick with shock." — Sue Carroll, Mirror.

"Yesterday when the news broke that she had been murdered, there was a rare stunned silence in the offices of the Sun. Many of us knew her..." — Sun editorial.

"My first reaction was that I couldn't write about the Jill Dando I knew, because I didn't know her. I met her just once, fleetingly, at a BBC seasonal programme launch... Yesterday, thinking back to that brief meeting, I realised that, like millions of other viewers, I DID know Jill Dando. Because I FELT as though I did." — Charlie Catchpole, Mirror.

Due Solemnity

"Stephen Hendry tells me about Jill Dando, it's terrible news. All the boys at the tournament are shocked... After the [snooker] broadcast, I hang around chatting. Most of the talk is about football. Me, Stephen Hendry and John Higgins talk about Scottish football; everyone scoffs." — TV snooker commentator Dougie Donnelly, Independent.

A Sense Of Proportion

"The cold-blooded murder of Jill Dando has shocked the country to its core. We have never known anything like it." — David Mellor, "Man of the People", Sunday People.

"The Sun was right yesterday to devote 13 pages to her murder and parliament to interrupt its debate. This is a one-off event that shatters the established parameters of our lives." — Alice Thomson, Daily Telegraph.

"There have been many horrifying pictures and other images of murder on our screens in the recent past, ranging from Kosovo to Colorado, but perhaps the most potent is that of the death of the popular and beautiful BBC presenter Jill Dando." — Alf McCreary, Belfast News Letter.

"Precisely because people saw Dando as a better version of themselves, they feel as though it is they who have been shot. They mourn not just for her but also for themselves." — Bryan Appleyard, Sunday Times.

"Jill's untimely death has made us all re-examine our own mortality. It has made us all realise how fragile and fickle life really is. One minute you're shopping for ink, the next you've got a bullet in the head..." — Carole Malone, Sunday Mirror.

Tact

"The question that comes to mind when you think of Dando's death is not 'how could this happen to such a famous, successful person?' but 'how could this happen to someone like us, in a street like ours?'... They [murders] occur on drug-ridden housing estates, or outside the rougher pubs and nightclubs. They don't happen to Jill Dando in Fulham." — Grace Bradberry, the Times, blithely assuming all her readers live in half-million pound houses in Fulham.

Total Recall

"In a vain attempt to banish her girl-next-door image, the ever-bland Jill Dando posed in a black leather catsuit, a la Emma Peel, this week... What's the betting that underneath the skin-tight suit lurked a pair of waist-high cotton knickers and a nice, warm winceyette vest?" — Carole Malone, Sunday Mirror, 25 April (one day before the murder).

"This was a woman no one had ever been able to say or write anything bad about." — Carole Malone, Sunday Mirror, 2 May.

No Score-Settling

"She [Sophie Rhys-Jones] looked irretrievably matronly... She probably appeals to the kind of perv who finds Jill Dando sexy; the sort of man who is repulsed by 'trashy' women, thinks Felicity Kendal is a goddess and likes his women to wear pristine, white cotton undies while pretending to be a virgin and talking in a baby voice in bed." — Julie Burchill, Guardian, 7 January 1999.

"Jill Dando looks great in her slinky wraps on Holiday, and I think she should wear them on Crimewatch to liven up an otherwise dull show." — Tony Parsons, ex-husband of Julie Burchill, Mail on Sunday, 10 January.

"I could not manufacture even a simulacra [sic] of dislike for Dando... I normally dislike clean-cut blonde women who appeal to the sort of men who fetishise about clean, white cotton underwear. But I had no feelings of antipathy towards her... True, she appealed to a rather sad type of male journalist, but then no one can be blamed for their fans." — Julie Burchill, Guardian, 28 April.

"Jill was a rare combination of beauty and decency..." — Tony Parsons, Mirror, 3 May.

Armchair Detection

"The modus operandi was not that of a professional... so I'm inclined to think it was the work of a Serb." — David Mellor, Sunday People.

"Am I alone in thinking that the announcement of Ms Dando's marriage, and her appearance on the front of the Radio Times in a leather jump-suit might act as such a trigger?" — Dr David Wilson of the University of Central England, Birmingham Post.

"The Radio Times last week may have contained a sinister 'message' for a deranged fan. Miss Dando, 37, was photographed in an untypically racy leather trouser-suit. On the back cover was a promotion for crime books. If the magazine is opened out, the advertisement inadvertently reads across the picture of Miss Dando with the chilling headline: 'Couldn't you just murder...' " — Andrew Alderson, Sunday Telegraph.

"The assassin himself must be a fanatic... I feel this is the work of a London-based Serb splinter group... My belief is that there was a hit list of about six people. Jill came into his sights first and paid for it with her life. What the police will be looking for now is some hard evidence to back this up." — John Stalker, former deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester, Mirror.

"One must tread warily when turning to national traits for even the most tentative explanatory purpose but to anyone who knows Serbs, the behaviour of the gunman has a peculiar Serbian feel to it... Just look at the idiocy of the population's support for Milosevic..." — John McVicar solves the crime in Punch magazine.

"We do not know who killed Jill Dando." — Top psychiatrist Dr Raj Persaud gives his expert opinion, Daily Mail.

Consistency

"Among the several suggested motives for the murder of Jill Dando has been the outlandish suggestion that the Serbs may have been responsible. Speculative though it may be, the theory was given considerable coverage in some newspapers yesterday..." — Express, 29 April, p9.

"Serb Death Threat to Dando Boss." — Express, 29 April, p7.

Open-Mindedness

"I was against bombing Serbia because I believed it would bring screaming chaos and because the Serbs had done nothing to us. But if a Serb did kill Jill, then now they have." — Tony Parsons, Mirror.

Scoops Galore

"JILL DANDO: THE LAST INTERVIEW. EXCLUSIVE." — front cover of OK! Magazine.

"Jill Dando: The Last Interview." — front cover of Now magazine.

Shunning Cliches

"Tears and flowers as the people came to mourn their second 'English rose'." — Independent.

"Jill Dando was clever, beautiful, witty and charming, the archetypal English Rose." — Sue Carroll, Mirror.

"Weston-super-Mare was today in mourning for its very own Princess Diana, Jill Dando..." — Bristol Evening Post.

"Even Diana, Princess of Wales's death in a car crash does not place an intolerable strain on credibility... But the shooting of Jill Dando is quite different... Days afterwards, nobody really believed it." — Bryan Appleyard, Sunday Times.

"Like Princess Diana, Jill was a beautiful young woman... Someone who we all, in our own way, grew to love." — Editorial in the Mirror.

"Jill had every reason to feel pleased and satisfied. She had achieved almost everything she had set out to do. Just as Diana had." — Sue Carroll, Mirror.

"The murder of Jill Dando is one of those rare events that make us question values and a way of life we take for granted. In that way her death is similar to Diana's." — Richard Stott ("His Bite's as Bad as His Bark"), News of the World.

"If Diana was the People's Princess then Jill was the People's Presenter." — Sue Carroll, Mirror.

Avoiding The Obvious

"She was the very last person you would expect to be found slumped in the door of her home, gunned down by a tall man running away whose motive, apparently, was not robbery." — Geoffrey Levy, Daily Mail.

"Nothing will bring Miss Dando back." — Editorial in Belfast Telegraph.

"Her Crimewatch work is, of course, not the remotest justification for this murder." — Editorial in the Stoke Sentinel.

"She appeared to have no enemies either. Tragically, now we know she had at least one." — Editorial in Sunday People.

"Jill Dando didn't deserve to die, yet she did." — Carole Malone, Sunday Mirror

Plugged In

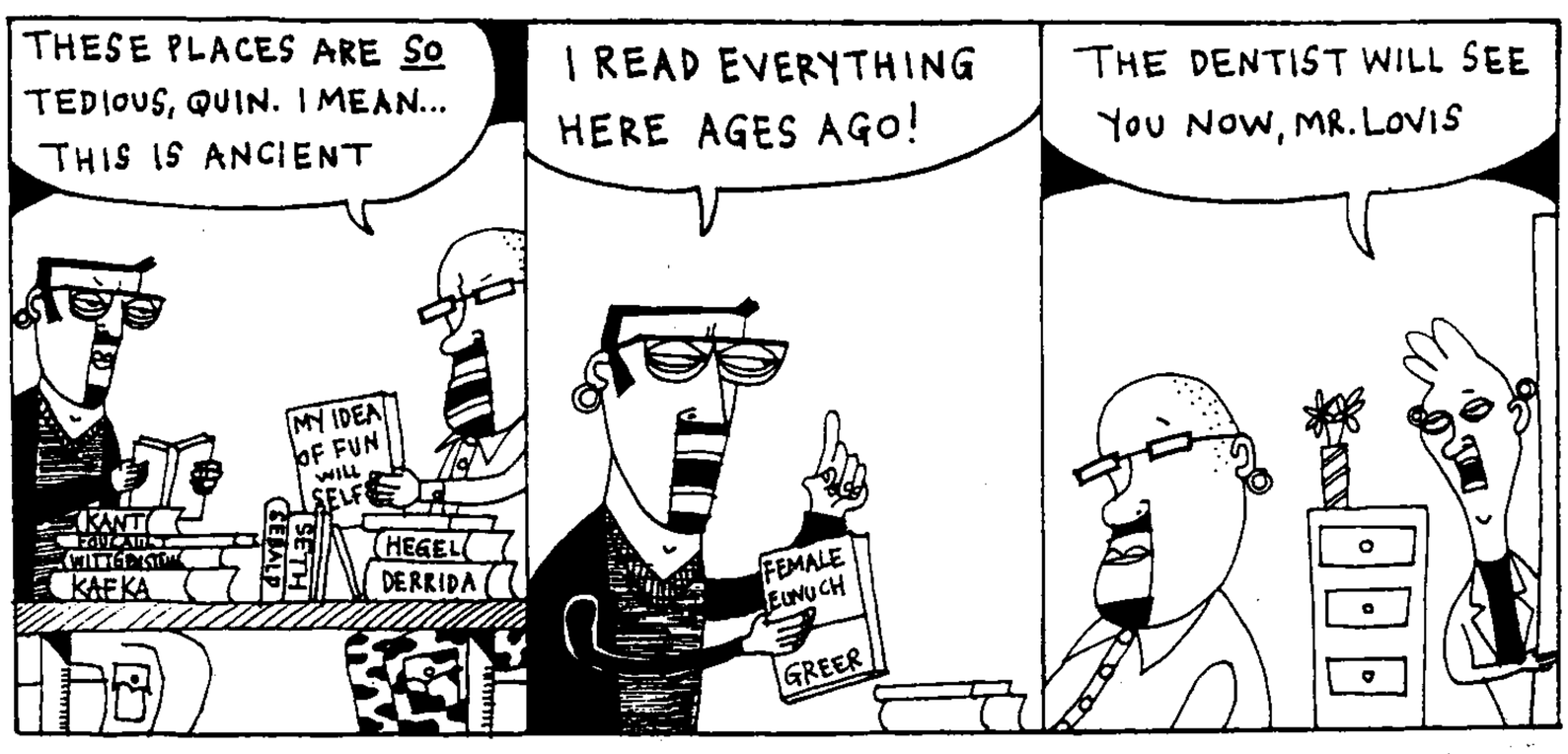
A fed-up priest has switched the times of his Sunday services — because his congregation are staying at home to watch live football on TV. The main 6.30pm mass at St Mirin's Cathedral in Paisley has been brought forward to 4pm to avoid a clash with live matches on Sky.

News item (with Sky logo)
Sun

An occasional column devoted to cross-media plugs masquerading as news.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER



DOING THE ROUNDS

LAST August the *Eye* published an audit showing how some babies with biliary atresia, a rare liver disease, were getting a much better deal than others.

Those going to a specialist liver centre treating more than five babies a year had a 64 percent chance of successful surgery, while those treated at a centre averaging one (or fewer) operations a year had a 17 percent chance of success.

M.D. concluded that all children with this condition should be treated at either Birmingham, Leeds or King's, London, the three expert centres treating enough patients to produce statistically meaningful results.

Nine months later, health secretary Frank Dobson's department has put out a press release agreeing with all the *Eye*'s proposals.

Of course not everyone is happy. In a letter to the *British Medical Journal*, five consultants from Booth Hall Children's Hospital and Royal Manchester Children's Hospital have complained that the *Eye*'s coverage was "inaccurate and misleading" (*BMJ*, 10 April) although they haven't written to the *Eye* yet.

Manchester was a "medium volume centre" with an average success rate of 54 percent and, if biliary atresia were a common disease, it might well have been chosen as another specialist centre. However, with only 50 cases a year there is only a need for three such centres. Any more would dilute the expertise and make any audit much less reliable.

The argument that parents want their babies to be treated locally rather than travel further was exploded by the Children's Liver Disease Foundation. As chief executive Catherine Arkley said: "Parents would move to hell and back to get the best for their children." M.D. has also spoken to the parents of children who had unsuccessful surgery at local non-specialist centres without knowing that such a disparity in results existed. Their sense of outrage and guilt that this information was not made available to them (when it has been apparent since 1984) is enormous.

The Manchester team was clearly providing a much better service than those doing just one

operation a year and its members are angry that the debate has been held in the media rather than behind the closed doors of the profession. Consultants at Birmingham Children's hospital are also annoyed as they were hoping their audit would be published first in *The Lancet* rather than the *Eye*.

The latest biliary atresia audit had been sitting on desks since 1996 and, aside from minor statistical adjustments, is as the *Eye* published it. The profession may have eventually got round to weeding out the surgeons who were attempting rare, complex operations on six-week-old babies and getting demonstrably poor results, but the public exposure of this scandal — admittedly painful for some parents — has had a huge impact on speeding up the process.

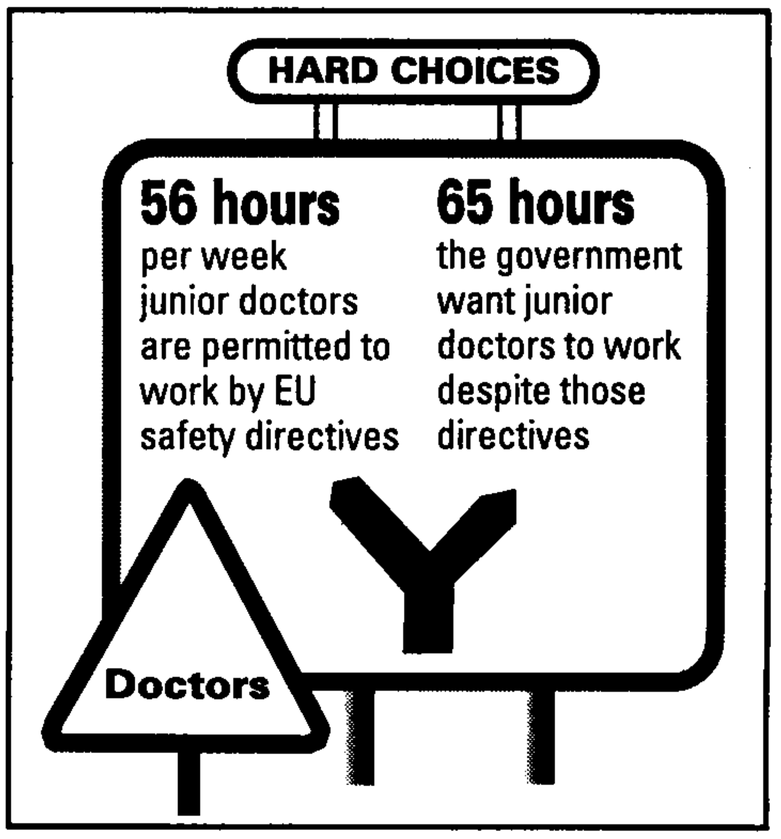
As ever the whistleblowers must remain anonymous for fear of reprisal. Little has changed in the seven years since the *Eye*'s revelations about heart operations in Bristol, except perhaps that some decision makers now take the *Eye* more seriously.

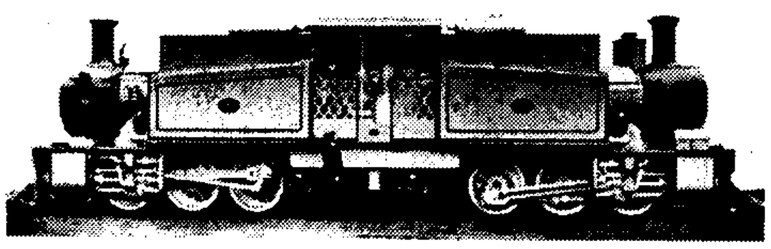
Step forward Barry Jackson, president of the Royal College of Surgeons, which is the first professional body to act on the biliary atresia audit. Mr Jackson has, however, refuted the *Eye*'s claim that the royal college knows the identity of poorly performing surgeons in its confidential audits (973).

The claim was based on a 1996 interview given by an RCS spokesman, the late Brendan Devlin, who told BBC2's *Trust Me I'm A Doctor* that he knew the identity of "No 169", a surgeon with very poor results for prostate surgery. "I can state now — unequivocally — that the *college* has never known the identity of no. 169," writes Mr Jackson. "Brendan Devlin did, as the then director of the comparative audit service, but this was privileged information."

Alas, Devlin is now dead. As for the *Eye*'s other question (why spend millions on audit if you can't identify the poor performers and prove to the public they've been sorted out?), Mr Jackson has promised to reply shortly in greater detail. In the meantime No 169 could still be out there. Look for a tattoo behind the left ear...

M.D.


HARD CHOICES
56 hours
per week junior doctors are permitted to work by EU safety directives
65 hours
the government want junior doctors to work despite those directives
Doctors



SIGNAL FAILURES

Focus on Public-Prism Partnerships

WHILE most people are baffled by Tony Blair's Third Way, Prism Rail has a very clear idea of how modern public-private partnerships should work.

Prism has probably been boosted by more community initiatives than any other train firm. It is now showing its gratitude to those communities by cutting services and holding at least one local council to ransom.

In the West Country local authorities, aided by a European rural grant, are spending £50,000 a year marketing the Exeter to Barnstaple route to tourists as the "Tarka Line". The result was a 3.6 percent rise in passengers last year, despite poor weather. Having pocketed the extra revenue, Prism's Wales and West franchise has announced plans to cut the line's services from 11 each way per day to seven. As trains are important for tourism and locals, Devon county council felt it had little choice but to pay Wales and West a handsome sum to retain two services. But two will be cut this month just as the couny prepares for the holiday season.

Similar marketing in Cornwall helped attract 14 percent more passengers to the Truro to Falmouth line last year. Wales and West's response? To cut one service each way from the timetable this summer. Academics calculate that the train service between Liskeard and Looe (marketed with £16,000 of local cash) generates £500,000 of spending each year in the small harbour town of Looe. Wales and West is cutting 20 percent of the services this month.

But rural areas are not the only ones where public money has been spent to help Prism. Local authorities spent millions of pounds building new stations near Swansea, even buying trains for Wales and West to run a local service. Prism is keeping its side of the bargain... by ditching more than a third of the local services later this year to save money.

Cheekily Wales and West blamed the councils for not marketing the trains (for not doing Wales and West's work, in other words); but the experiences in Devon and Cornwall indicate the company would have pulled the plug even if passenger numbers in Swansea had grown 14 percent.

Another Prism Rail company, Cardiff Railway, has seen local councils spend £14m on the track and signals it uses to reduce delays. After most of the work was completed, Cardiff Railway's punctuality record was so poor even the limp office of passenger rail franchising (Opraf) demanded action and fined the tiny franchise more than £1m — 6 percent of its annual subsidy — between April and December last year.

Passengers may wonder if things can get any worse under cash-strapped Prism Rail, formed by a bunch of second-division bus managers just before rail privatisation. And they can. The long-term plan was indicated when Prism chief executive Giles Fearnley voiced interest in replacing some train services with — surprise, surprise — buses. This already happens on the Avonmouth to Severn Beach line near Bristol, where Wales and West will run more buses than trains from this month.

"For half the subsidy going into the Exeter to Barnstaple line we could run a much better regulated coach service," Fearnley said. The one flaw in his argument is that hardly anybody would use a regulated coach service (his euphemism for a local bus) instead of a train. Many locals would use cars and leisure travellers would choose a different destination that could still be reached by train. Odd Fearnley hasn't spotted this fly in the ointment: since he joined the bus industry in the early 1970s bus use outside London has dropped massively, buses being regarded as transport of last resort.

'Dr B. Ching'

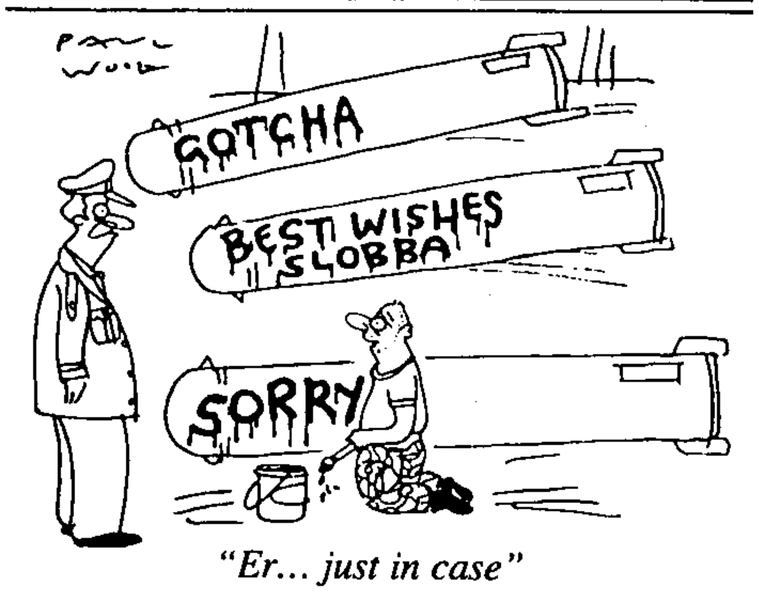
WORLD WIDE WEB

CAMPAIGNERS against Nato's Balkan adventure now have another celebrity endorsement to add to those from Henry Kissinger and Harold Pinter. Step forward the Rev. Ian Paisley, whose official website — www.ianpaisley.org — has a characteristically thoughtful analysis of the war.

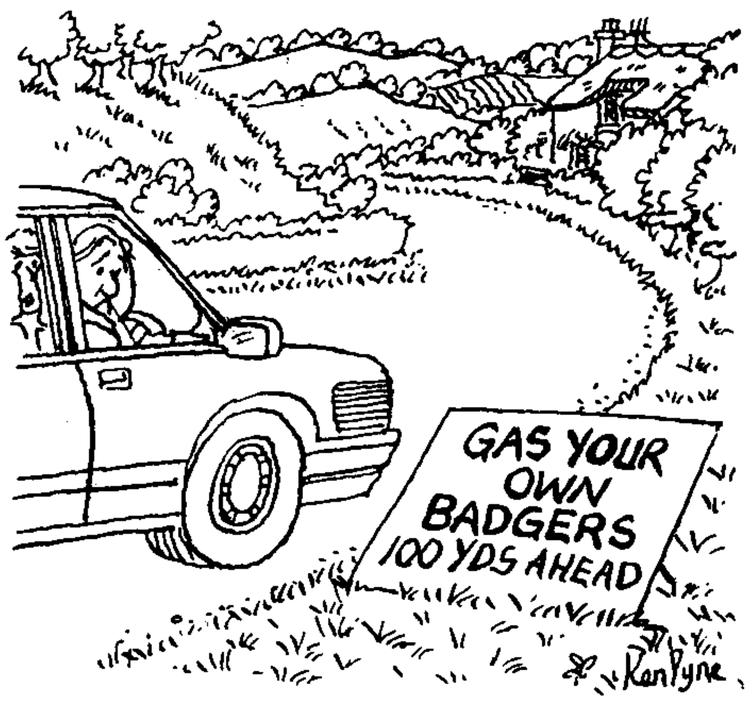
After routine denunciations of Clinton ("the man who shamelessly and unrepentantly defiled the White House") and his "subservient poodle" Blair, Paisley identifies the real evil genius behind this dismal duo. Surprise, surprise, it turns out to be... the pope.

Milosevic's ethnic cleansing has been "falsely portrayed by the Vatican-controlled media as aggression against the people of Kosovo". (This Vatican-controlled media apparently includes everyone from the BBC to the *Sun*.) According to Paisley, TV footage showing columns of refugees "allegedly fleeing Serb persecution" may well be faked.

The pope is also the Mr Big behind the Kosovo Liberation Army, he reveals. "The KLA has been a most convenient pawn in the Vatican's historical obsession to dismember Yugoslavia into non-existence... [which] was recently described by the Russian Nationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky as 'a Vatican plot'." So that's a fact, then.



"Er... just in case"



DOWN ON THE FARM

THE bacteria police are back on the unpasteurised milk warpath again. But were they ever really off it?

Clearly piqued by their inability to get the now infamous green top milk bottle by the neck and throttle the life out of it for good, the men at the ministry (MAFF) are stepping up their efforts to find another way of outlawing the wholesome pints.

Food safety supremo Jeff Rooker, egged on by the committee for the microbiological safety of food and assorted environmental health fanatics, finally believe they may have found the Achilles' heel of the small dairy farmer who, against all odds, still manages to supply the local community with real milk.

The master plan? Double the frequency of milk tests and triple the price the farmer has to pay for them. Oh, and demand a second health warning be inscribed on the bottle advising children, the infirm and elderly to avoid consuming its contents.

Could this renewed outburst of angst have anything to do with the ominous lack of fatalities (none in 40 years) among consumers of unpasteurised milk? Or is it simply part of the government sell-out to the fat cats of the food industry who like their milk ultra heat treated, homogenised, semi-skimmed and completely revolting?

Which product should really carry the health warning?

'Gumboot'

Down on the Fish Farm

THE dirty ball of wool being woven by Scottish office (SO) factory-salmon farm regulators continues to unravel.

It is now alleged that they have refused to provide infectious salmon anaemia (ISA) samples to the world's leading authority on the disease: Are Nylund, of Bergen university's department of fish biology, in Norway.

Nylund has been studying ISA since 1984 when it was originally identified in Norwegian farms. Recently Norske Hydro, the world's largest producer of farm salmon, asked Nylund to examine the relationship between the Norwegian strain of ISA and the Scottish strain. Curiously he was not allowed to publish the result of this work. Norske Hydro wanted more samples examined.

Allegedly, when Nylund asked Norske Hydro to provide additional samples from its Scottish subsidiary company, Hydro Seafood GSP, where the disease was discovered last May in marine cages to the north of Fort William, Norske Hydro said all Hydro Seafood's diseased fish had been slaughtered and no more samples were available.

Nylund then approached Dr Ron Stagg, head of fish diseases at the government's marine laboratory in Aberdeen, which is spearheading the ISA eradication policy in Scotland. Dr Stagg, as a responsible scientist, readily agreed to this request from his Norwegian colleague. But when Dr Stagg visited Nylund in Bergen in April he failed to provide any samples.

This "scientific insult" might have been prompted by an uncomfortable possibility: that the Norwegian and Scottish strains of ISA are identical. If this is the case, and were it made public, it would prove beyond reasonable doubt that ISA was introduced to Scotland by the illegal importation of diseased fish, fish sperm, fish eggs or broodstock from Norway (see *Eyes passim*).

Norwegian scientists further allege that the ISA strain which caused the collapse of the farm salmon industry in New Brunswick in 1996-97, when fish farmers received compensation to the value of C$25m, and the current ISA outbreak in Nova Scotia, reported in April, is also of Norwegian ancestry.

If the Scottish ISA strain is the same as that in Norway, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, SO regulators will have to explain why they failed to prevent the disease entering Scotland's waters. Why they have failed to take legal action against those responsible. Why they now propose to compensate fish farmers some of whom might have been involved in creating the disaster in the first place which has brought Scotland's farm salmon industry to the verge of financial ruin. Fish heads could roll; not least at the Scottish office.

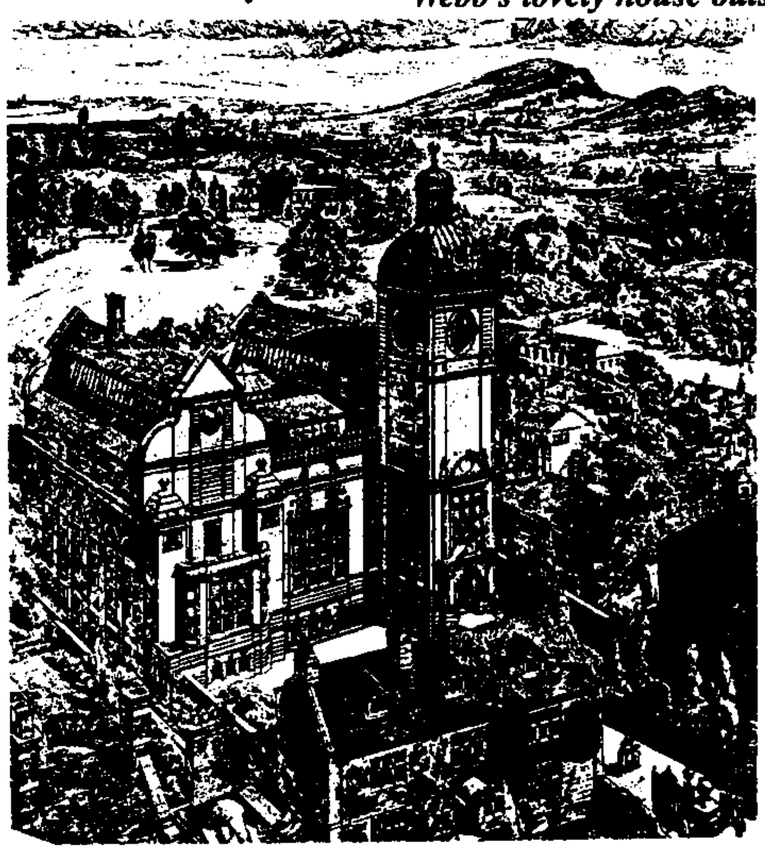
'Old Trout'

NOOKS and CORNERS

ONCE upon a time the fair town of Leek in Staffordshire used regularly to appear in this column. When the town was under the heel of the brutal junta led by councillor Susan Newall which had seized control of Staffordshire Moorlands district council, historic buildings were neglected and threatened by the cheapest and nastiest of commercial developments (*Eyes passim ad nauseam*).

Eventually the junta was dislodged by a popular uprising and in recent years Leek has been looked after and become the handsome, prosperous town it deserves to be thanks to the Queen of the Moorlands Campaign and such initiatives as the Moorland Town Partnership.

Yet I now must return to Leek because one of its best buildings is under threat — owing to blinkered municipal neglect. This is the Nicholson Institute: a product of the enlightened culture which flourished in the town in the late 19th century thanks to the influence of William Morris's friend, the silk dyer Thomas Wardle.



Built in 1882-84, the new institute contained a library, art gallery, museum and art school, and was given to the town as a memorial to Richard Cobden by Joshua Nicholson, a Liberal non-conformist silk manufacturer. The building was designed by the local architect, W.L. Sugden, in the new free Classical manner in red brick and, in deference to the principles of William Morris and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, a 17th house on the site was carefully preserved even though it blocked the best view of the new building. As Mark Girouard wrote in his study of the eclectic, "Queen Anne" style, the Nicholson Institute is "a secular church dedicated to the new religion of culture, art, and education".

Well, art and culture — let alone religion — mean little to the sort of local authority bureaucrats who run things these days. The Nicholson Institute is now owned by Staffordshire county council, which has declined to spend any money on its maintenance for years. The roof leaks, and now the council is considering moving the library elsewhere — and no doubt replacing boring old books by videos at the same time. And, to make matters worse, Moorlands district council is considering the surrender of user rights to the upper floor to the county council, even though this is one of the few places in Leek where local societies can meet and cultural activities can take place. To do this, surely, would be a betrayal of civic duty.

The Nicholson Institute is a listed building. If it were privately owned, the local authority could serve a repairs notice and insist that it was looked after. But as it is in municipal ownership, the county council seems to be able to avoid its responsibilities with impunity. This is a disgrace. But, instead of whingeing, perhaps Moorlands district council should do the responsible thing, take over the building itself, seek grant aid and restore the Nicholson Institute as the beautiful and useful building it was intended to be for the people of Leek.

THINKING of William Morris and culture, of nonconformity, of art, architecture and education, I am sad to learn of the death of John Brandon-Jones. Admittedly he was 90 and his name will not mean much to most of my readers, but to anyone interested in the Arts and Crafts movement and in such great men as Philip Webb, C.F.A. Voysey and W.R. Lethaby, Brandon-Jones was an inspiration and a guide.

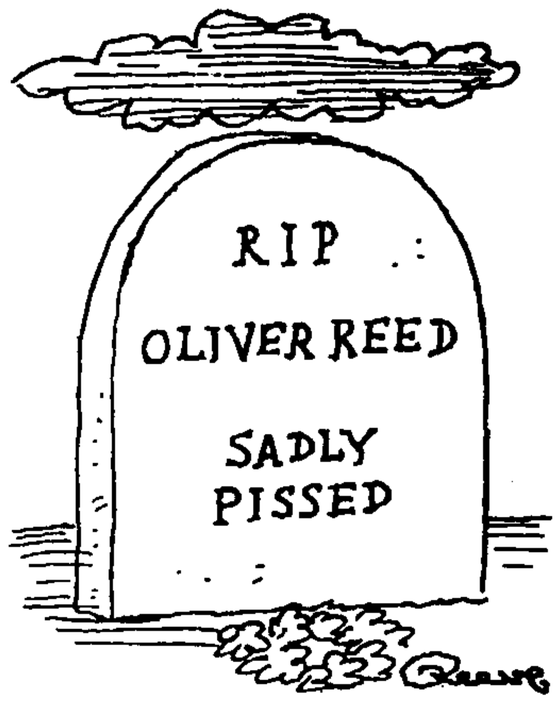
He was instrumental in persuading a blinkered and reluctant National Trust to take on Standen, Webb's lovely house outside East Grinstead. With his death, the last living link is broken with that school of thought which generated beautifully crafted, harmonious and sensible buildings until British architecture was overtaken by a dogmatism that vaunted originality above common sense and encouraged ignorance of history rather than learning from tradition.

John Brandon-Jones was a teacher and a writer, but above all he was an architect. He designed buildings which were undemonstrative and sensible and a joy to live and work in. He was John Betjeman's architect for his house in Cornwall. His Hampshire County Buildings at Winchester are beautifully made in brick and fit well into the city. Naturally Pevsner dismissed them as "neo-Georgian" when they are nothing of the sort: more a creative development of the Gothic Revival which also lay behind the work of his heroes.

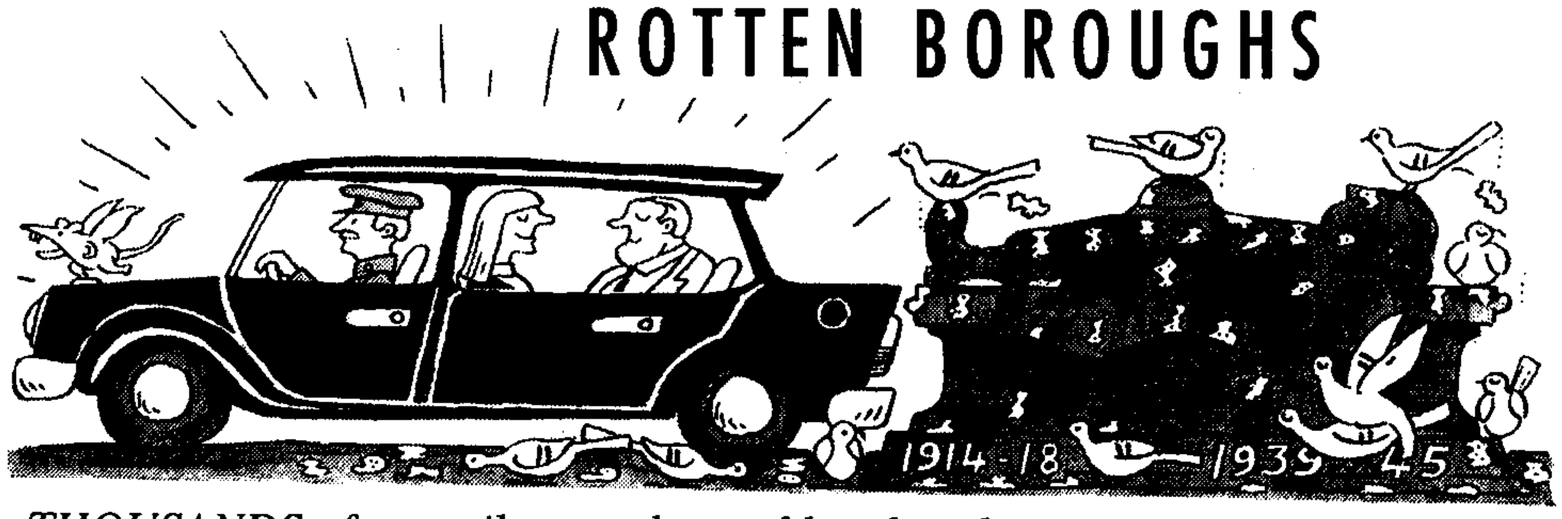
Brandon-Jones was wholly undoctrinaire about style: he was happy with both the Classical and the Gothic, and did not try to be either traditional or assertively modern; what mattered to him was building well and giving clients buildings which looked good when left out in the rain.

He was a man of integrity who loved old buildings and learned from them. In consequence, his work was resolutely ignored by the Architectural Review and the AJ and he never received any of the honours and gongs that are showered on fashionable posturing figures who produce flashy buildings that look well in photographs and need huge amounts of money spent on them after only a few years.

'Piloti'



ROTTEN BOROUGHS



THOUSANDS of council seats changed hands in last week's local elections. Up and down the land, starry-eyed new councillors will be taking their seats for the first time, eager to do their bit for local democracy. As a service to these tyro councillors, the Eye *lists some of the qualities important for success in local government . . .*

1. LOYALTY

THE city of Liverpool has caused major headaches for the Labour leadership over the past 20 years. The party suffered its worst setback in Merseyside political memory when the Lib Dems gained overall control of the city in May last year. Millbank struck back the week before last Thursday's elections when it announced the defection of Rosemary Cooper – a Lib-Dem stalwart for 25 years and former mayor — to New Labour.

Hours before her conversion to St Tony's cause, councillor Cooper had sat on the Lib Dem benches to vote against her new mates in the Labour party – even though she had already secretly signed up to join them!

At the end of the council meeting she told her Lib Dem colleagues they would be "in for a shock". The following day there was an early morning media event at Liverpool's Pier Head, where "Red Rosie" announced her Pauline conversion.

These shenanigans are of course unconnected to Cooper's position as chairwoman of the Liverpool Women's Hospital Trust, for which she receives £15,125 a year. She was originally recommended for this position when the Tories were in power by her friend Matthew Parris, *Times* columnist, Mandelson-outer and former Tory MP.

Health secretary Frank Dobson has said he will not reappoint previous Tory nominees to NHS trusts. Rosie was, however, reappointed on 1 December 1998. By an amazing coincidence, her application to become a member of the Labour party was quietly made a month earlier.

WEST Berkshire Tory councillors whose votes ensured that Vodafone will go ahead with its contentious HQ on a greenfield site outside Newbury also know about loyalty.

The vote that decided the issue at a full council meeting was always going to be close. In the event a Tory amendment recommending acceptance of Vodafone's plans, minus various irritating conditions proposed by the Lib Dems, was passed by one vote.

The matter would have gone the other way had the Lib Dem mayor, and holder of the casting vote, Gerald Vernon-Jackson, been allowed to vote. He was barred on the advice of council lawyers because Vodafone discovered he had once been turned down for a job with the company – prompting the suggestion from pompous Tory leader Susie Kemp that he was motivated by "sour grapes".

Meanwhile 12 Tories who declared an interest of their own – that they were personal friends of landowner Genevieve Mather, who stands to make a tidy £20m or so from the sale of the 30 acres on which Vodafone plans to build — *were* allowed to vote. Mrs Mather is the wife of Graham Mather, Tory MEP for Hampshire North and Oxford. Vodafone gave £75,000 to Tory party funds before the 1997 election.

2. INTEGRITY

READING council's chief fraudbuster Malcolm Gardner quit in disgust after getting a bollocking from the council's chief executive for, er, doing his job.

YMCA offices in Reading were raided in March following a five-month investigation by Thames Valley CID and the council's own anti-fraud team. Inspector Knacker is anxious to clear up various "irregularities" involving between £3m and £4m in single regeneration grant money, benefit claims and asylum-seekers' and Jobseekers' allowances.

Mr Gardner resigned after being lambasted by chief executive Joyce Markham for not having told her in advance that police were to raid the YMCA. Why exactly she needed to know is unclear. Two days after Gardner quit, his deputy Kim Neal was told that her services were no longer required. Once Reading's internal procedures are exhausted, a fascinating industrial tribunal beckons. Meanwhile, Inspector Knacker is continuing his inquiries.

3. INTER-PERSONAL SKILLS

AVRIL OSBORNE, who took early retirement as Orkney's social work director last month, opened her heart to the *Sunday Mail*, claiming she was driven out by an "anti-gay hate campaign". The truth is more mundane: she had to go because she was making such a mess of her job.

Osborne, who is openly gay, was brought in to rebuild the relationship between the Islands Council and local people following the South Ronaldsay sex abuse shambles of 1991, in which four families had their children taken into care by over-zealous social workers who believed baseless allegations. Alas, her abrasive manner, plus a succession of suspensions and sackings, persuaded councillors she had to go. Inspector McKnacker has failed to find any evidence of a campaign of intimidation against her.

Osborne seems to have few friends in Orkney. One, however, is Roma Paton, the department's children and families officer, whose career has prospered under Osborne's patronage — and duvet. She was no doubt the "council insider" who told the *Mail* that Osborne was "exceptional at her job". So exceptional that even Orkney council, which knows a duff social worker when it sees one, gave her £60,000 to go away.

One of Osborne's former colleagues, Stuart Christie, appeared at Kirkwall sheriff court last month after pleading guilty to a charge of breach of the peace. He told the court he had planned to set fire to himself outside council HQ in protest at his treatment by Osborne. Later this month an industrial tribunal will hear a claim for unfair dismissal by the former officer in charge of the council-run old folks' home in Kirkwall. Margaret Jackman fell out with Ms Paton — a crime which brought cheers from her colleagues but a suspension from the director. After refusing to go on a "counselling course" she was sacked.

4. MODESTY...

ANYONE following the coverage of Dame Shirley Porter's triumphal claims of vindication in the appeal court over the Westminster homes-for-votes might have assumed her name has been cleared.

In fact a total of six high court judges have now passed judgment on the matter. Four have ruled in favour of the district auditor and only two in favour of Porter. If this were European football, Porter FC would be out on aggregate.

Dame Shirley did not make much of the dissenting judge's comments. To help those who may have missed them, Lord Justice Walker found there was "no doubt that there had been widespread and persistent pretence" and that Dame Shirley and her sidekick David Weeks had "lied to the court".

Letters

Can't see the funny side

Sir,

Your taste is sinking lower — the Blunkett so-called joke was NOT funny. At first I was angry then depressed that anyone could concoct or even pass for publication this offensive item. Still, I suppose I have to continue my subscription to see what you'll descend to next — how about a "funny" bit about still-born babies, or whatever else you have in your repertoire of humour.

JACK FRIZZELL,

Via e-mail.

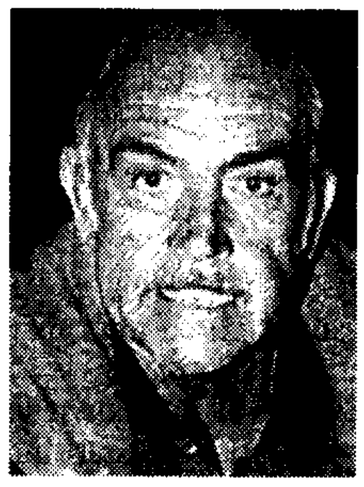
Sir,

Blunkett turns a blind eye, eh? (975) And the really hilarious thing is he won't be able to see how witty you've been! Keep up the side-splitting irony for those of us who don't have to blunder around with white sticks and guide dogs...

Yours disappointedly,
SIMON CANNEY,

London NW5.

Lookalike



Creature From The Black Lagoon

007

Sir,

I understand a new face has appeared in nationalist political circles in Scotland. A study of his features indicates it might be a spot of infiltration by our old friend 007, aka James Bond, aka Sean Connery. Or is it someone completely different?

Yours,
MILA ASHENDEN,

Esher, Surrey.

Second skin

Sir,

Re OBN, issue 975. It is very unfeeling of Private Eye to give Michael Jackson another brown nose when he went to such trouble to get rid of his first one.

Yours faithfully,
G.L. MARRIOTT,

Ware, Herts.

"It's not another bloody award, is it, Raleigh?"

Balkan-Eyezation

Sir,

In response to Mr Markevic (975). The Partisan movement was not "almost wholly comprised of Serbs" before late 1944 — the appeal of joining that movement as the only real form of resistance (Mihailovic's influence being limited to within Serbia itself) to the collaborationalist Ustasa Croats was not just limited to Serbs escaping from the Ustasa genocide but also to Croats opposed to the Ustasa.

The latter, after all, was never a "mass" movement despite what Dr Pavelic proclaimed. As far as Cetnik appeal to Croats was concerned, the counter-terror by Cetnik units (which were outside Mihailovic's control) against Croats and Bosnian Muslims in what was nominally Ustasa territory put paid to any pretension the Cetniks had as a Yugoslav resistance force (they were only really Serbian).

And in response to Mr Petrovich (same issue)...

1815: Blucher only marched when assured that Wellington could stand and fight and (admittedly) vice-versa; hardly "Brits only saved from certain defeat by the Germans". The redcoats had effectively beaten off Napoleon's Imperial Guard just before the Prussians arrived.

1854-6: Despite bad planning (and the exposure of poor military practice and nursing facilities), the Russians were beaten.

1914-18: Gallipoli was a cock-up due to the Dardanelles raid (planned by one W. Churchill) organised some months before. The Salonika campaign (British fighting alongside Serbs) has clearly not been taken into account. As for being saved by the Americans — what about the situation in Germany (ie, food riots) before and during Ludendorff's final all-out offensive in the spring of 1918? Did this not have as much bearing on the Armistice as American intervention?

1939-45: "Brits collaborate with Germany"?! I presume he means Appeasement, in which case I suspect he has been cruelly misinformed as to the dates.

1941: Dropping the Serbs (presumably Mihailovic) "in the shit"? The whole question of Mihailovic and the Cetniks from the British point of view is too long to be answered here, as is the collaboration issue; I would suggest he re-reads Roberts, Tomasevich, etc before writing back.

Yours,
N.J. YOUNG,

Via e-mail.

Sir,

As a retired officer with 40 years' service in the Royal Irish Fusiliers, I was not at all surprised to read Mr Paul Petrovich's somewhat warped and inaccurate account of British military history (Letters, 975).

Firstly, the battle of Waterloo in 1815 was actually two separate battles. One at Waterloo itself and another at a small remote farmhouse at Hougomont. It was this latter battle that decided the outcome of Waterloo. The forces under Wellington did indeed comprise Germans, in the King's German Legion which was raised by George II in 1730 and subsequently incorporated into the British army, as well as Prince William's Hanoverian Regiment, however they were not used during the siege at Hougomont, instead the following forces were employed:

1st Battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers, 2nd Battalion 1st Foot Guards and the 1st Inniskilling Dragoon Guards. It is true that Marshal Blucher's Prussian Guards arrived in the evening giving relief to Wellington at Waterloo, but by the time they had arrived Napoleon's forces under Marshal Ney had been beaten at Hougomont.

It is not true that the British army combined with French forces could not beat the Russians during the Crimean campaign. Mr Petrovich is obviously unaware that it was the Thin Red Line of the 51st Highland Regiment (which later became incorporated into the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders) which routed the Turkish and Russian forces at Sevastopol.

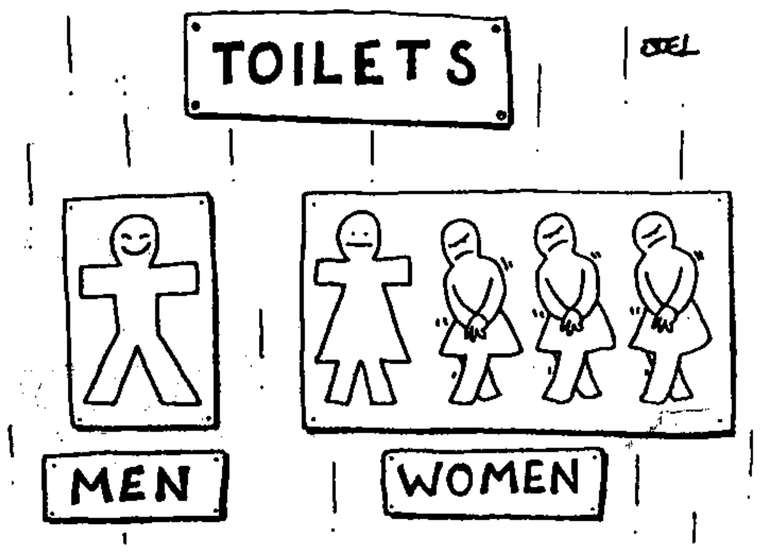
I remain sir,
Your obedient and humble servant,
JAMES R. VANDELEUR, MC, DSC, DSO and Bar, Colonel, 1st Battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers (ret'd)

Sir,

I don't often feel the urge to write in but your two Serbian correspondents in Eye 975 needed a reply. Sure the Croats and Bosnians aren't blameless, but neither letters mentioned the Serbian massacres in Bosnia, the attempted invasion of Croatia (which had the temerity to declare independence from Yugoslavia), let alone the current mass expulsion, harassment and murder of so many Kosovars of Albanian extraction. The scale simply does not bear comparison. To talk of "perspective" is quite breathtaking.

Regards,
BRIN SNOWDON,

Via e-mail.



The Liar?

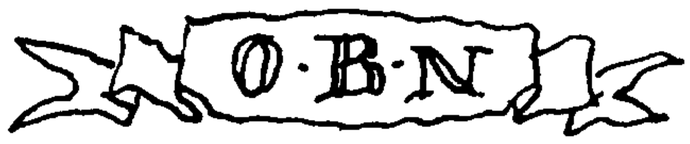
Sir,

"And undoubtedly any list of Cambridge alumni would include some of the finest and most creative minds in the world: Isaac Newton, John Milton, Charles Darwin, Joan Robinson, Stephen Hawking, David Attenborough, Michael Winner, Emma Thompson, Eleanor Bron, Stephen Fry..."

This was included in last week's Pseuds Corner. I stared at it and stared at it and stared at it again. I still don't get it. Please explain.

Yours exasperatedly,
STEPHEN FRY,

Via e-mail.



The woman is a marvel. I remember Sir Alfred Sherman, knighted, like me, on her recommendation, saying that he would willingly die for her, if asked. Would any aide offer to do the same for Mr Blair? I doubt it. Therein lies the difference, the marvellous, blessed, glorious difference.

SIR PEREGRINE WORSTHORNE on Margaret Thatcher

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

Number crunchings

0 ■ number of US aircraft downed by the Serbs in the course of the war

3 ■ number of US aircraft which have managed to crash all by themselves

Nice man

Sir,

I attended the public meeting during which Sam Galbraith MP attacked Unison activist Tam Waterson (HP Sauce, EYE 975).

Mr Galbraith did not tell Mr Waterson to spend less time representing members and more time on his own job. Mr Waterson asked an important question about Consort's [Consort Healthcare] attitude to framework agreements and how staff rights would be affected. Mr Galbraith suggested that if he spent less time shooting his mouth off and more time representing his members, there might not be a problem.

Equally odious, wouldn't you agree?

Yours,
KIRSTEN HEY,

Edinburgh.

Simon says

Sir,

I am neither tame nor obliging.

*Nobody in Number 10 told me they were thinking of getting Mo Mowlam to run for mayor. I **found out**, from two independent sources, and duly printed it — first — in the Spectator.*

I know I came to this journalism lark relatively late, but I was under the impression that resourcefully getting stories and then publishing them before anyone else was pretty much the point.

I had also presumed that the form was for those with absolutely no idea what's going on inside government to write about something else, not make stuff up about people who do.

Yours in shocked disillusionment,
SIÔN SIMON,
Associate Editor, The Spectator.

Save the world

Sir,

I notice with interest that in Eye 974, at the front of the small ads, you quoted a letter from Bedfordshire on Sunday.

I am interested because I am the author of that letter.

Given the nature of your magazine, I suppose you used the letter because you found it "amusing". If that is the case then so be it. I suppose that can only be a good thing. However, my purpose in writing the letter was not to amuse. It was written in order to encourage people to send me their sincere suggestions as to how I can make the world a better place. The question I ask is "What action can one man take to best improve the world in which we live?"

And for people to answer that question I provide two contact addresses. Better World, PO Box 20130, London W10 6WF or e-mail: better.world@virgin.net

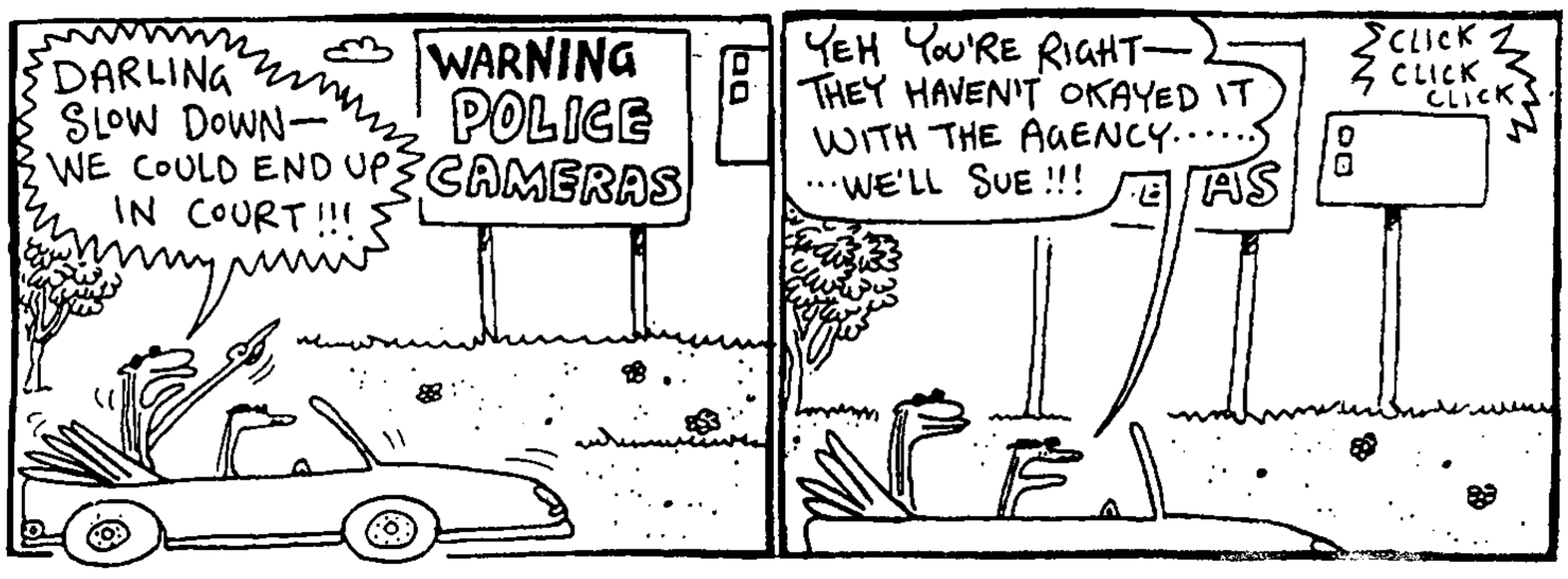
I'm saddened that you chose only to quote that part of the letter that amused you, and chose not to print these addresses, so that it might help me to achieve something worthwhile.

Sincerely,
D.J.G.,

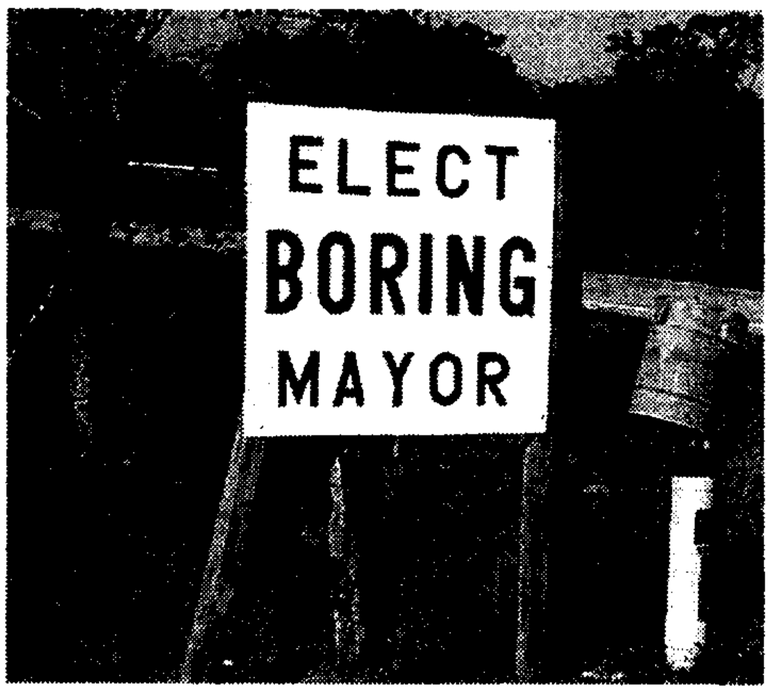
Via e-mail.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


DARLING SLOW DOWN— WE COULD END UP IN COURT!!!
WARNING POLICE CAMERAS
YEH YOU'RE RIGHT— THEY HAVEN'T OKAYED IT WITH THE AGENCY..... ...WE'LL SUE!!!
CLICK CLICK CLICK

I-SPY *St Felipe, Texas*



Submitted by R.E. Chapple. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photograph. No transparencies.)*

Social Securitas

Sir,

An article in Private Eye on Friday 2 April headed SECURITAS HOLE, referred to a company called Group 4 Securitas.

I should like to point out that there is no connection between my company, Securitas UK Limited, and Group 4 Securitas.

I should appreciate it if you would publish this letter to put the record straight.

Yours faithfully,
MEL B. SCOTT,

Managing Director, Securitas UK Ltd.

LUVVIES

I don't think I regret not marrying. My generation were sort of bohemian hippies and I became a declassée "actorine". You didn't marry.

FRANCES BARBER
Radio Times

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

Bad manors

Sir,

It's always good to see the Eye picking up small inaccuracies, such as Connie McCarthy's Labour leaflet for Manor ward worrying about education for the "priviledged".

One small inaccuracy of your own though. Manor ward isn't in Liverpool. It's in Sefton, the council for Bootle and all stations to Southport.

B minus for you, I think.

Best wishes
GILES BLUNDELL,

Labour Candidate, Victoria Ward, Sefton.

Andersen country

Sir,

In the news section last issue you imply that Arthur Andersen plc was self-disqualified from the "Casework" system bid on the grounds of their inept handling of the NIRS2 project.

"Arthur" Andersen, the "professional services" providers... I fear had nothing to do with NIRS2. The posse of corporate whores to whom your ire should be directed are Andersen "Consulting", an entirely different firm...

Regards,
NAME AND ADDRESS WITHHELD.

Road rage

Sir,

Richard Simpson's letter (974) seems yet another example of the spurious arguments advanced against rail freight by the haulage industry in an attempt to defend its business.

To answer his closing question, new trains have to conform to extremely rigorous standards regarding emissions and noise levels. Britain's biggest railfreight company is currently taking delivery of an extremely large order of new locomotives embodying these standards, as well as hundreds of new wagons, which demolishes the "rusted wagons... shagged-out diesel locomotive" image put forward by Mr Simpson. All of this is funded by private money, rather than "massive government subsidies" — in fact, rail freight pays its way far more effectively than do passenger trains.

The figures advanced by Dr B. Ching in the same issue serve to emphasise the manner in which road haulage has been able to preserve its pricing advantages supported by "hidden" subsidy. Next time you're stuck behind a heavy lorry, or nearly forced off the road by an ill-driven one, think about that — and about the pro-road politicians who have sucked up to the hauliers ever since Wislon failed to nationalise road haulage as he promised.

A.N.O'RACK,
Via e-mail.

Sir,

Dr B. Ching seems to have let his enthusiasm for railways cause him to overlook facts about this technologically eclipsed form of transport which relies on massive weights to keep smooth steel wheels in adhesion to smooth steel tracks. No matter how efficiently the railways are run they can but operate to be at some 3 percent of their capacity if paved. Railways run from buildings where no fare paying passenger lives or works to other buildings where no fare paying passenger lives or works, thereby giving rise to other journeys at either end. They are incapable of climbing to a first or second floor and, therefore, require vast acreages of land in city centres to park until a slot can be found for them to reverse out of the station.

It is only by taking the tracks OFF these routes that an integrated transport system useable by everyone can be achieved. Coaches operating at constant speeds achievable on these dedicated routes will be able to carry passengers seated in comfort at two-fifths the cost of rail and require no government subsidy. The only real product that the government subsidy has achieved is keeping in place this outdated, inflexible mode of transport. Dr B. Ching should continue to enjoy his model railways and leave the real world to be transported on pneumatic tyres, water or air.

Yours faithfully,
ROGER M. BALE,

St Clement, Jersey.

Didn't we do well

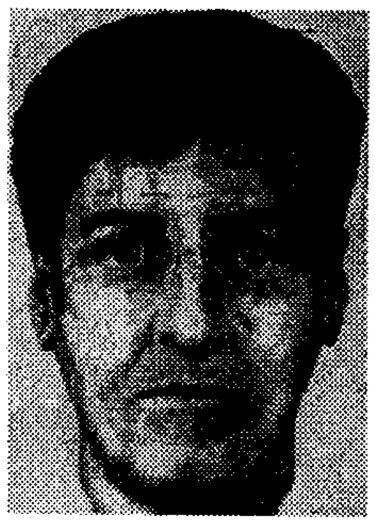
Sir,

Following the recent shootings in Rochdale and the murder of poor Jill Dando, I think the government should ban all handguns. Hang on a minute — haven't they already done that? Well, that was a waste of £500m of taxpayers' money paid in compensation then.

Yours sincerely,
G.T.G. JACKSON,

Exeter.

Non-lookalike



Campbell

Suspect

EDITOR'S NOTE: Would readers please stop sending in the accompanying photographs highlighting the complete lack of resemblance between the e-fit released by police involved in the Jill Dando inquiry and the prime minister's press secretary, Alastair Campbell. Such a comparison is in poor taste, and any readers who continue to make it will have their subscriptions cancelled by us.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

Punter: *I'm 43 now and have lost confidence through having so many set-backs.*
Kilroy: *And how old are you now?*
Punter: *I'm 43 now.*
BBC1
(C McCormack)

"The Queen's Park Oval, exactly as its name suggests — absolutely round."
JOHN SNAGGE, BBC1
(Tony Crozier)

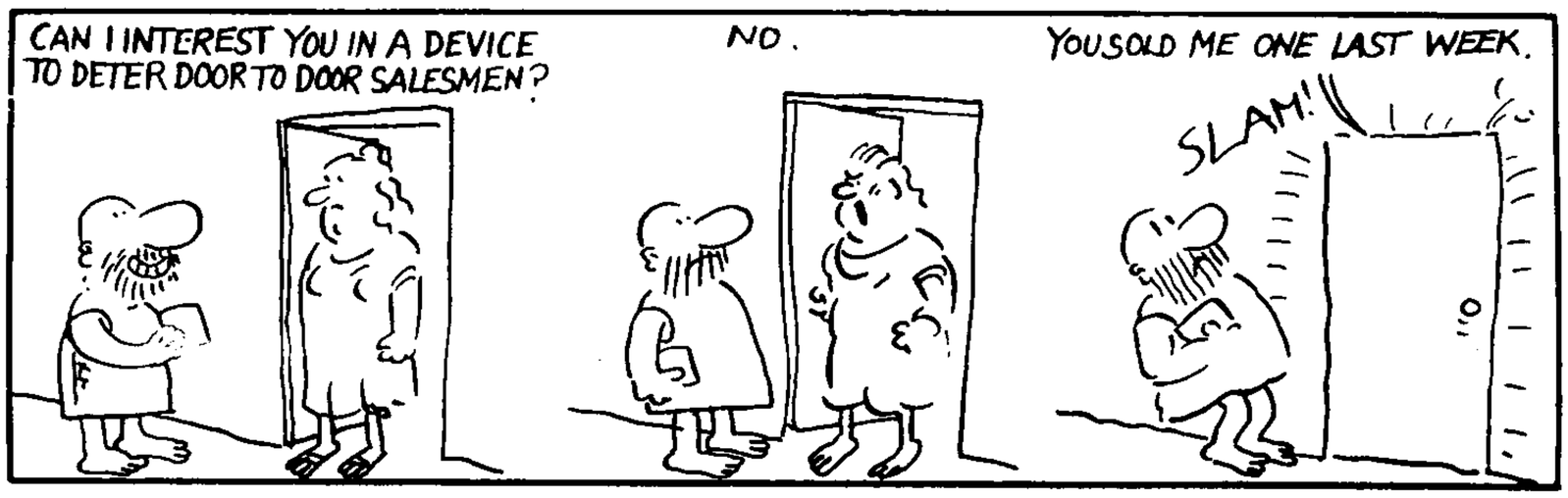
"She ran through the field like water through a duck."
JOHN FRANCOME, Channel 4
(Adam Irvine)

"Now Man United are 2-1 down on aggregate, they are in a better position than when they started the game at 1-1."
RON ATKINSON, ITV
(John Richards)

"Our news at 11.30, a full half hour before other mid-day news."
FOX 41 TV, Kentucky, USA
(John Taylor)

HOM SAP

AUSTIN

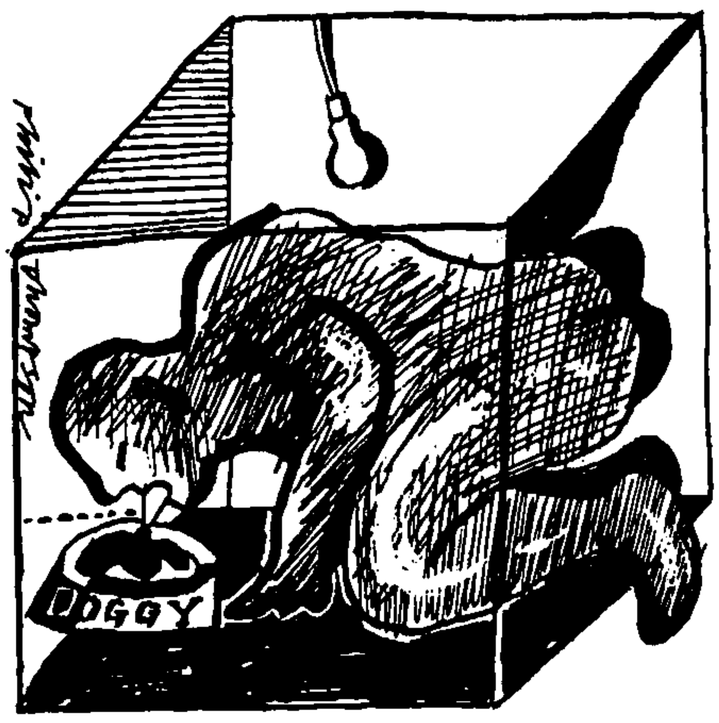


FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

"Do you think we have pushed Nasubi too far?" asked Toshio Tsuchiya, presenter of NTV's top variety show, Susunu Denpa Shonen (Don't Go For It, Electric Boy!). "I don't think so, but who cares if he suffers long-term psychological damage? Just think of all the prizes he's won!"

A year ago, twenty-three-year-old Nasubi accepted a challenge from the Japanese tv programme, agreeing to be confined in a tiny apartment with no food, clothing, or television until he had won a million yen worth of prizes in magazine competitions. "Unbeknown to him, we'd hidden cameras in the apartment, so we could broadcast an update on his progress each week," the show's producer told western journalists. "He was naked for the entire year, because he didn't win any clothes, and for the first few months he had to eat dog food, because the only food competition he'd won was in a pet magazine. He was completely isolated, so he had no idea that his naked exploits were turning him into a tv celebrity. Week



by week, his hair and beard grew longer, and his room filled with prizes."

After his release, Nasubi told reporters that "I suffered mentally every day. I felt trapped between sanity and madness, and I had no idea that everyone was watching my naked body all this time. It shouldn't be allowed. But, to be fair, they've just given me hot miso soup and a bowl of rice and pickled plums, so I've agreed to go to South Korea next year and repeat the challenge." *(The Toronto Star, 5/4/99. Spotter: Frank Connolly)*

—●—

"Believe me, the Delhi police have made a monumental error," declared Ram Kumar Dhuriya to a meeting of villagers in Najafgarh. "I challenge any man to sexually assault a buffalo. It is impossible as the animal will toss and turn. Besides, why should my son attempt something so silly when he is happily married?"

Home Guard Constable Dharamvir Singh was facing charges of "carnal intercourse" with a buffalo called Bogli. According to a police spokesman, "the accused had been drinking heavily, and Bogli's owner saw him entering the shed where the animal was tethered. Being suspicious, he gathered several villagers together, entered the shed, and caught the accused enjoying himself with Bogli. Quick as lightening, the men dragged him off, thrashed him soundly, and handed him over to us, but it was too late. Bogli was so shaken that she stopped chewing fodder, and eventually had to be given away to some butchers from western Utter Pradesh."

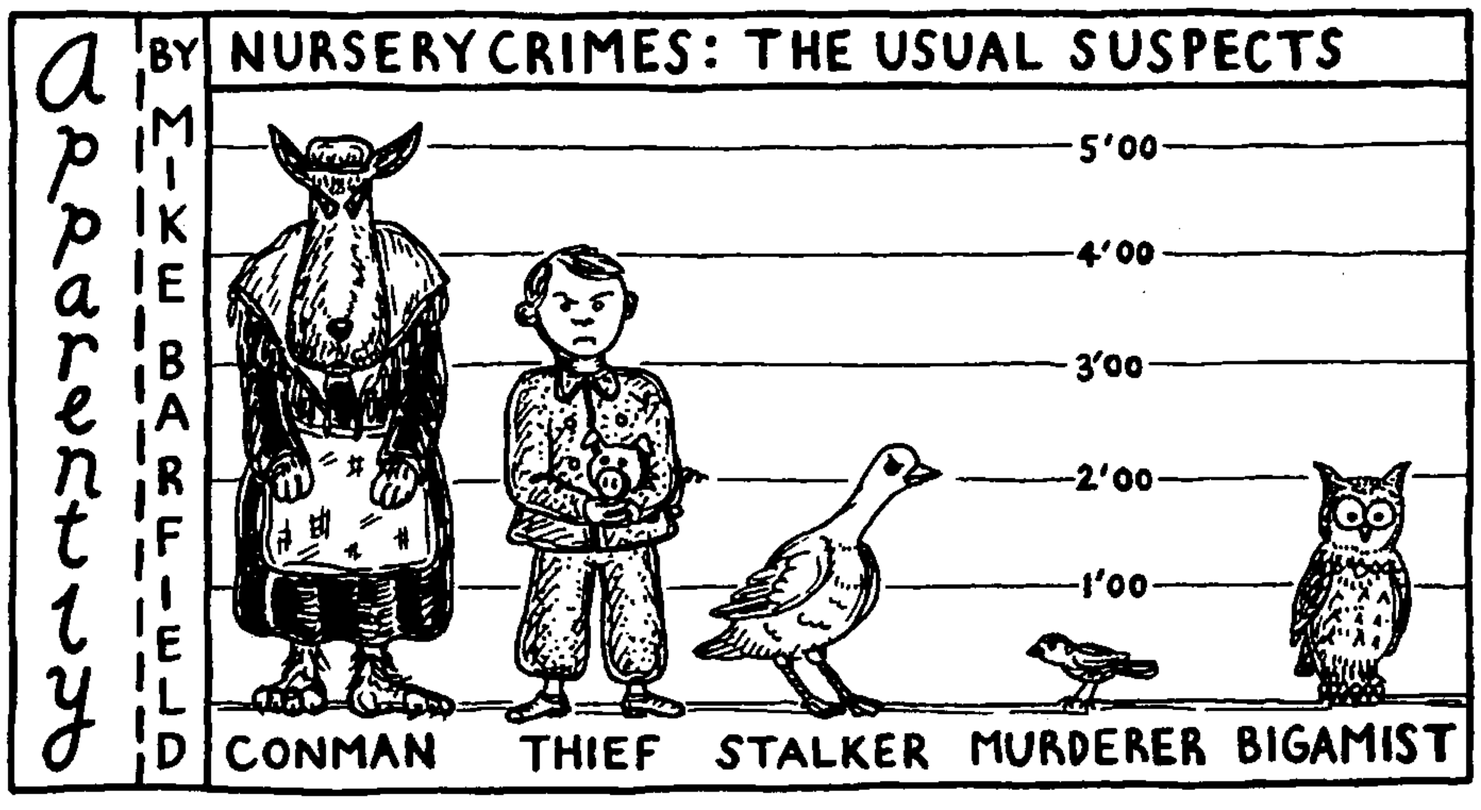
Dharamvir's father denounced the charges, which could result in a ten-year jail term. "The buffalo's owner had been fighting with my son, and I am sure he cooked up this entire story to get revenge." But village headman, Ratan Lal, said he simply wanted the issue buried. "This shameful incident has shaken us all," he said. "We just want to forget it." *(India Today, 28/12/99. Spotter: Nigel L. Baker)*

—●—

"I still can't believe my arm's been chopped off," Gordon Lyons told reporters from his hospital bed in the Royal Darwin Hospital, "and I've been told that my heart stopped three times during the operation. But at least I've still got my life, and that's the most important thing."

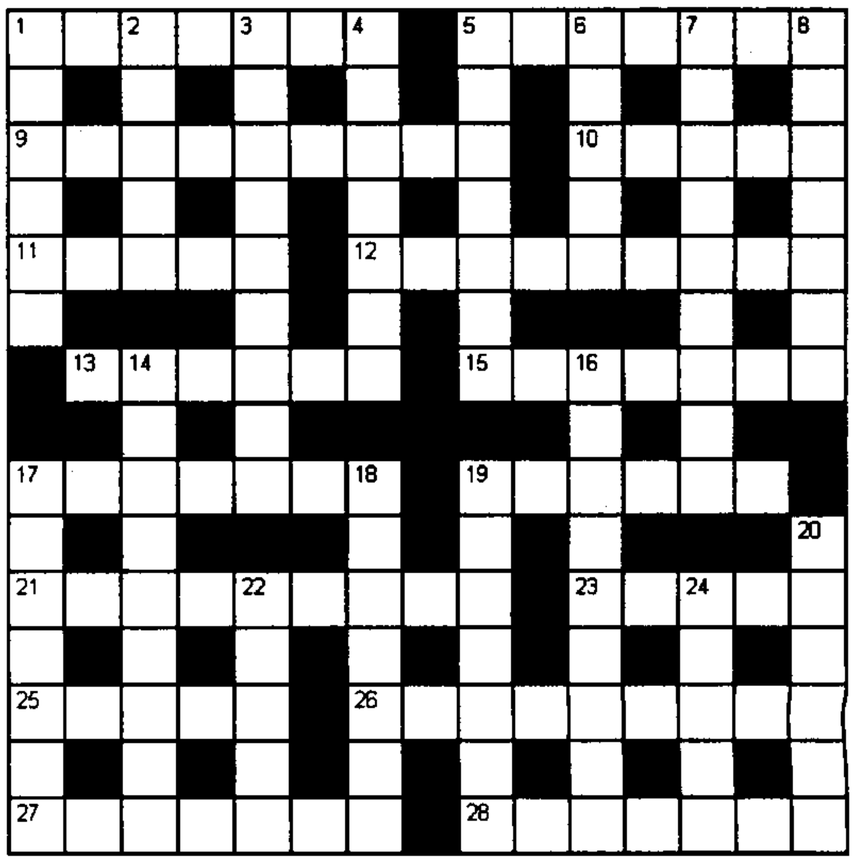
Lyons' problems began when, during a heavy drinking session, he decided to catch a snake to put in the fish tank of his local pub. "I saw what I thought was a python, but was actually a deadly King Brown. I grabbed it with my left hand, because I was holding a beer in my right, but it got loose and grabbed the web of my left hand. Its fangs were so big it ripped my hand open. I finally wrestled it into a sack, and then for some stupid reason shoved my hand in the bag. I guess it was angry and smelled blood, because it bit me another eight times. I started to lose consciousness, but luckily my mate kept me awake until the ambulance came by whacking me on the head and pouring beer on me."

Dr Bart Currie later described how Lyons had remained in a coma for six weeks, requiring continuous blood transfusions after the amputation of his left arm, because the venom prevented the blood from clotting. "Of all the snake bite victims in Australia, he is without doubt the sickest to have ever survived." (Sunday Herald Sun [Hong Kong], 14/3/99. Spotter: Rhonda Palmer)



EYE CROSSWORD 131

by Cyclops — *£100 prize*



ACROSS

1 Alan Clark-type sticking member in pop songstress? (7)
5 Left is in worse surroundings – peer takes the piss out of this (7)
9/1dn Opportunist lawyer offers conveyance for injured parties plus trailer (9-6)
10/19dn Clearly over the pretty little head of many an ambitious female? (5,7)
11 Aristocrats' organs without number (5)
12 Flog song collection (4-5)
13 Put-upon employee makes it one against five in Murdoch's outfit (6)
15 Government enterprise stifles political understanding (7)
17 Mike briefly into cola distribution gets rich (7)
19 Against being embraced by archdeacon transsexual (6)
21 Soul's destroyed wearing short skirt, according to leading fascist (9)
23 Roger Cobain roughly without interest (5)
25 Players, etc. to transfer (5)
26 Holy cigar! Surprisingly not many members control such a state (9)
27 Having no knockers to speak of, blooming well giving it all you've got (4,3)
28 Dress was out in front, twisted (7)

DOWN

1 (see 9)
2 Not-so-famous 'Gazza' loses his head and sees the light! (5)
3 Live comics about to go off ruthless leader (9)
4 Where to land, around one, Lord Lucan, for instance (7)
5 Hairstyle busy creatures feel at home with? (7)
6 Incense: hazard when going topless (5)
7 Scarper when party errand boy grabs one (2,1,6)
8 Would-be re-emergent novelist's career to bite the dust? (7)
14 Many interesting positions in here should Mrs. T. get involved with AA(UK) on one (4,5)
16 Dithering oily brat, Brown finally makes leader (4,5)
17 Take place successfully, though climax in poor taste (4,3)
18 Bonked in the open air – given stiff treatment (4,3)
19 (see 10)
20 As may be seen by all, Neddy's turned a natural colour (6)
22 Go one better and expose party as gay? (5)
24 Coincidence Cilla hosting *Parkinson*? (5)

£100 prize to first solution opened on 21.5.99. Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 130

(misnumbered as 129 in last issue)

Winner: L. BAKER

ACROSS: 1 Balls-up 5 Deposit 9 Leg-iron 10 Iterate 11 Idled 12 Smear test 13/16/18ac. Millennium Time Bomb 16 (see 13) 18 (see 13) 19 Bystanders 22 Melbourne 24 Ponce 26 Organic 27 Ashdown 28 Futures 29 Lottery.

DOWN: 1 Belgium 2 Legal 3 Shredder 4 Penis envy 5/15 Drive up the wall 6/21 Poetry Corner 7 Snake bite 8 Theatre 14 Limelight 15 (see 5) 17 Snapshot 18 Bump off 20 Stepney 21 (see 6) 23 Rocks 25 Noose.

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

And a very special *hullo!* this week to all the seven Kosovan refugees whom we have welcomed to the parish as our contribution to solving the tragic temporary problems of the Balkans until, of course, the war is won and they can return safely to what remains of their homes!

As you probably know, our Kosovan friends have been put up in the old St Albion's gasworks, which has been converted over the weekend by the ladies of the parish.

I think this open-hearted gesture proves all those people wrong who said that St Albion's shouldn't take in any of the refugees.

How ridiculous! Particularly hurtful was the comment of our friend in Tesco's, who was once again waiting for me at the checkout last week, even suggesting that I should donate some of the contents of my trolley to the new refugees.

I pointed out that our visitors would

have no use for such items as kiwi fruit, sun-dried tomatoes or New Zealand Chardonnay. "I thought you said we weren't going to take them in," said our argumentative friend, "because it sent 'the wrong signals' to Mr Milosevic. Now you say it's our duty to offer them sanctuary. You don't know what you are doing, Vicar, do you?"

"I know exactly what I am doing," I told him, as he inexplicably fell face first into a reduced price over-ripe camembert. As he climbed out of the deli counter, covered in stinking cheese, our friend looked distinctly shaken. Perhaps, like Mr Milosevic, he is beginning to crumble, and he will soon be suing for peace!

Elsewhere in this issue you will find a report of my hugely successful visit to Macedonia by our editor Mr Campbell. I would have written about it myself, but modesty forbids!

Yours,

Tony

St Albion's in the Balkans!

"War Be With You"
The Vicar Tells His New Flock

Our Vicar was given an ecstatic welcome by more than half a million refugees when he made a surprise mercy visit to Macedonia last week. Many of them had walked hundreds of miles to greet him, and it was an emotional moment for them when they at last saw the man about whom they had heard so much. The Vicar preached an eloquent sermon on the theme of "the just war, so long as it is just in the air". Although they didn't understand every word he said, the refugees were deeply moved to another refugee camp down the road. A.C.

Good Manners

I understand that once again parishioners have been making fun of Mr Prescott of our Working Men's Club for mispronouncing foreign names and getting his words mixed up when standing in for the Vicar. When he read out prayers for "Kostobrava" and then announced that "Service will be served after the coffee in the vestibule", this was ***not*** *funny, and it is bad manners to mock someone just because he has not had the benefit of a private education, like the Vicar. T.B.*

TEXT OF THE WEEK

Chosen by the Rev. Natony Blair

"And if your left foot should offend you, then shoot yourself in it at once."

Book of (Chinese) Proverbs, Ch. 7, v. 15.

Suggestions Box

One of our parishioners has come up with an excellent idea to stop us giving offence to all the Sikhs and Muslims in the parish every time we refer to the date. He suggests that in future we replace the old offensive AD and BC with something that people of all creeds can live happily with, ie BT and AT — "before Tony" and "after Tony". That makes today's date 12 May 0002AT!

++++ Notices ++++

■ I was very disappointed to hear of the very poor turn-out for my friend Professor Giddens's lecture on **"The Globalisation Of World Internationalism"**. Four people really is a poor show for such an important talk, particularly when two of those people were Cherie and myself, and the other two were Mrs Giddens and her friend Mrs Wainwright. Do please make an effort to attend his next talk, on **"The Internationalising Of World Globalisation"**, or Mr Cunningham, the Churchwarden, will come round and do some of his enforcing!

■ I was also very disappointed by the even poorer turn-out to select team leaders for the new self-governing **Scottish Country Dancing Group** and the **Independent Welsh Male (and Female) Voice Choir**. If no one is bothered about choosing the leaders, I might as well choose them myself!

Luckily my friends Mr Dewar and Mr Michael won enough votes to take over these new societies, but I have to say that the lack of gratitude displayed was pretty hurtful. T.B.

PARISH POSTBAG

Dear Vicar,

You stupid, irresponsible twat! You and your friend the Rev. Clinton are talking out of your bums. You are worse than Hitler. Worse even than Nixon. Your hands are covered in

Yours sincerely,
Harold Pinter, Caretaker,
Magnesia Lodge, Sidcup Road.

The Editor reserves the right to shorten letters for reasons of space or obscenity. A. Campbell

THE NEW POLITICS
WHY BRITAIN WILL NEVER LOOK THE SAME AGAIN

by Political Staff **Phil Space**

THEY said it would never happen. But on May 6th 1999 it did. The political landscape was inexorably changed once and for all. In a historic 24 hours that shook the world the face of British Politics was irrevocably redrawn in an extraordinary revolution *that* swept aside centuries of tradition.

Not since the Battle of Bannockburn when Mel McGibson surrendered to the overwhelming might of King Edward the Fox has this sceptred isle seen anything to match this momentous day. *(Keep going. Ed. Only seven pages left to fill.)*

As dawn broke over the battlements of Edinburgh Castle, a lone figure stood silhouetted against the blood-red sky.

For, on this man's shoulders the mantle of Scottish greatness will sit, the latest in a long line of larger-than-life Scottish heroes. Their ghosts seemed to parade before him — Robert the Bruce, Macbeth, Sir Walter Scott, Kenneth McKeller, Logie Baird, Andy Stewart and his Band, William McGonnagal, Stanley Baxter, Ian McKaskill.

And now, there he was, the heir to greatness: Donald Dewar *(Who he? Ed.)*

HOW THE NEW POLITICS WORKS

The sterile old-style politics of opposition has gone for ever. In one fell swoop Tony Blair has created a new way of governing Britain. He promised reform and now we have it.

Out Goes
● **Yah-boo style confrontation.**

In Comes
● **Meaningful dialogue resulting in consensus.**

Out Goes
● **Old-style first-past-the-post majority government.**

In Comes
● **New-style proportional representation allowing all parties a fair say in the way Britain is run.**

The first example of the new politics in action occurred in the Sean Connery Suite of the Caledonian Travel Lodge at a historic meeting of the Scottish Labour and Liberal Democrats who met over McDonald's McMuffins and carbonated Highland Spring water to decide Scotland's future in a civilised, modern way that is a million miles from the backbiting world of Westminster politicking. Said the newly elected Donald Dewar:

"There will be no deal with the sandal-wearing beardies unless they shut up and do what I tell them."

The LibDemocrat leader Hugh McHee agreed, saying "There will be no deal with Tony's toadies unless they drop tuition fees, give us the best jobs and do what we tell them."

The meeting later broke up after a short fight which was continued in a nearby pub.

Those Scottish Election Results In Full

Auchtermuchty South
(Turnout 6)

Angus McLoonie (Kill All Sassenachs Party) 2; Arran McSweater (Liberal McDemocrat Alliance) 2; Jimmy McTimeserver (Old Labour) 1; Heather McBroccoli (Scottish Greens) 1; Harry Twistleton-Phipps-Farquhar (Conservative and Unionist) 0. No change. *(That's enough results. Ed.)*

Those Welsh Election Results In Full

Pontymeithon
(Turnout 1)

Llewellyn Lloonie (Burn English Cottages Party) 0; Daffyd Duck (Llliberal Democratic Party); Ron Davies (Brixton Dinner Party) 0; Tarquin Twistleton-Phipps-Farquhar (Conservative and Unionist) 0; Simon Heffer (English Independence From Wales) 0; Screaming Lord Sheep 1; Ron Davies swings both way. *(That's enough Welsh Elections. Ed.)*

Those English Election Results In Full *(Cont'd p. 94)*

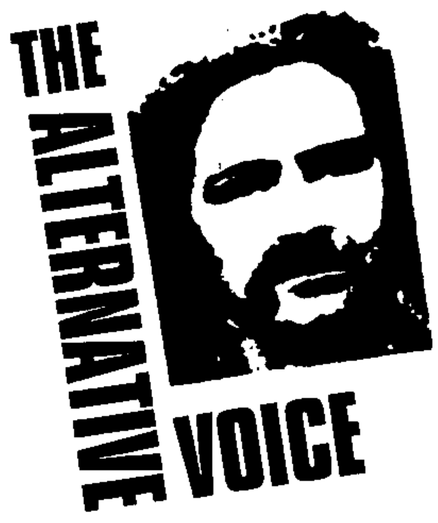
Is This The Next Director General Of The BBC? *You Decide!*

Ring our Brillo Line to register your vote — 0898 7534174

And here are the main arguments for and against the Brillo candidacy:

For	**Against**
Brillo Hairstyle	Hates BBC
Red Braces	Asian Babes
Asian Babes	Red Braces
Hates BBC	Brillo Hairstyle

Phone Now!



Dave Spart, Co-Chair SNNN (Stop The NATO Nazis Now), Tufnell Park Branch

The Imperialist warmongers, ie, Adolf Clinton and Tony Himmler, have finally emerged in their true colours in their deliberate murder of innocent Chinese diplomats from a country with which we have no quarrel whatsoever, er... we would like to express solidarity with our student comrades in condemning this disgraceful and wanton violence against a nation that is internationally known for its stand on Human Rights and its genocide in Tibet... er... er... er... *(Cont'd p. 94)*

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam
Sir Dirk Bogarde

So. Farewell
Then.
Sir Dirk
Bogarde.

Actor and
Private Eye
Shareholder.

Yes, you helped
The magazine
Out in the
Sixties.

Keith says that
Was your
Finest hour.

Apart from
Doctor In The House.
Obviously.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

TV Highlights

The Shrub Show With Liz Hurley 8.00pm BBC2
New gardening programme where Liz gets down on her hands and knees and shows us her herbaceous borders.

The Lift Men From Hell 9.00pm BBC1
Britain's most offensive lift operators are revealed in a frightening new fly-on-the-ceiling docu-soap from the makers of Petrol Pump Attendants From Hell. This week Eric, senior lift operator in Bentalls, Neasden, traps an elderly gentleman's scarf in the door.

Paranormal Pets 8.00pm Carlton
Can spiders predict the future? Roger's pet tarantula, Mystic Monty, accurately foresaw the bombing of the Chinese Embassy by NATO and has also won the lottery ten times.
(That's enough TV. Ed.)

WILLIAM IS 'NOT PC' SAY CRITICS

by Our Children's Books Editor
Beatrix Campbell-Potter

THE MUCH-LOVED hero of the "Just William" children's stories, known to millions for his cheeky smile, ill-fitting trousers and mud-spattered baseball cap, is under attack from leading intellectuals.

On the eve of his 80th birthday, young William has been told that he is "old-fashioned" and has "an incorrect attitude" to everything.

"What kind of a role model is William for the children of today?" the critics ask, pointing to the following misdemeanours:

- organising a gang of "outlaws" to play pranks on the vicar, the Rev. A.R.P. Blair;
- not showing sufficient respect to authority figures like the vicar, the Rev. A.R.P. Blair;
- putting on silly voices to imitate the vicar, the Rev. A.R.P. Blair.

"William is totally out of place in the Britain of the 1990s," say the critics. "It is time to get rid of him and replace him with a more suitable character, eg. Just Tony."

PUNCH CAPTION COMPETITION

THIS cartoon, showing 19th century nursing pioneer Mary Seacole holding a copy of Punch magazine, first appeared in The Daily Telegraph in an article on Florence Nightingale on 28 April 1999.

Using your skill and judgement, complete one or both speech bubbles as humorously as possible for a more contemporary audience.

Completed entries to Fuggin' Bubble Competition, Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG by Friday 21 May.

A Cab Driver Writes

for the Sunday Telegraph

Every week a taxi driver is invited to comment on an issue of topical importance.

This week: The War In Serbia by Andy Roberts (Cab No. 666).

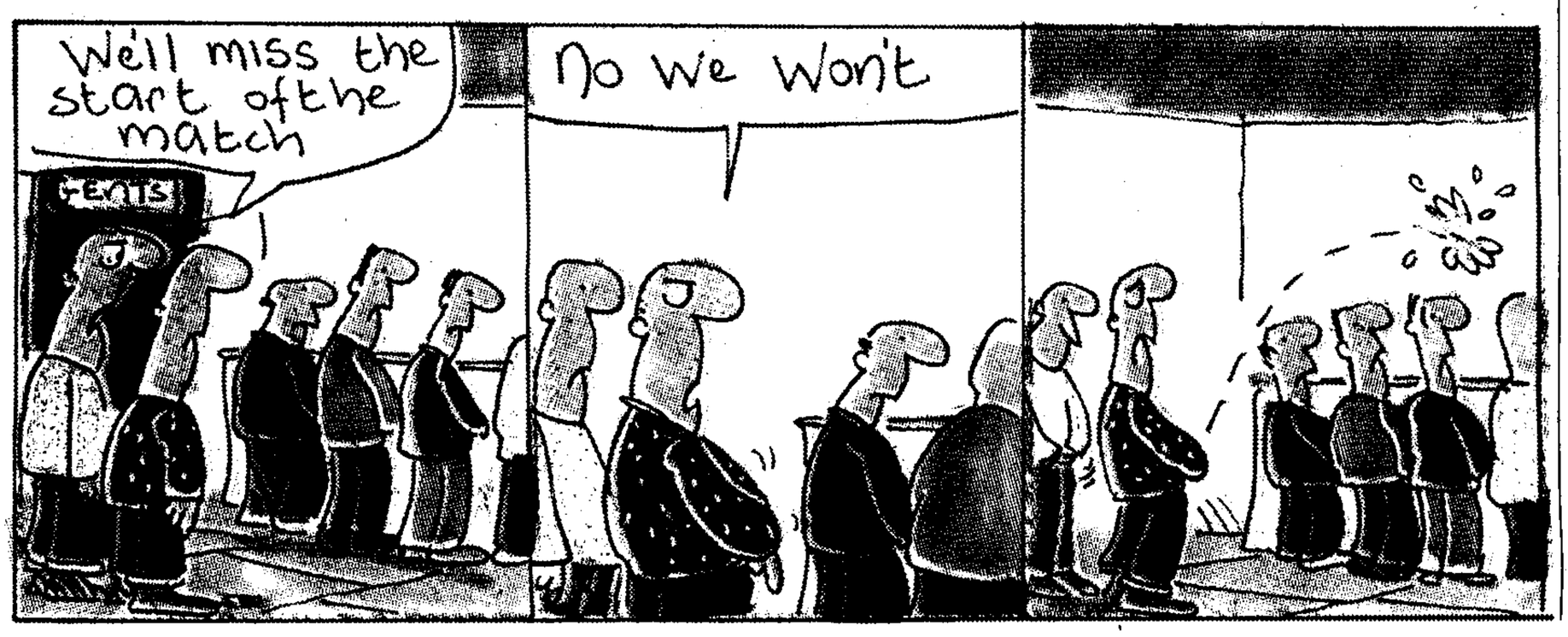
BLIMEY! See what those Serbs have done now, guv? They're making bloody fools of us. I mean that NATO is bloody useless innit? Blair, Clinton, bunch of tossers, if you ask me! Worse than bloody Chamberlain signing up to Munich in September 1938, know what I mean?

Anyway, know what I'd do with that Slobodan Milosawotsit? Drop the atom bomb on Belgrade. Nuke the Serbs, that's what I say! It's the only language they understand. It certainly brought the Nips to heel and made Admiral Yamomoto get on board the USS Missouri double quick to kiss McArthur's arse, pardon my Serbo-Croat. No, guv'nor, stop mucking about, let's go nuclear.

Do you want a receipt, guv? I 'ad that Winston Churchill in the back of my book once. Now there was a real prime minister...

© *The Sunday Telegraph*

HUSBAND



Conflict In The Balkans

Briefing

Day 94

- **NATO attacks military installation in Belgrade. Ice cream van in Pristina is successfully destroyed.**
- **Clinton regrets civilian casualties, but promises "The war will go on until it stops."**
- **Pentagon sends warship, USS Enterprise, to Balkans. "Its five year mission," according to Admiral James T. Kirk, "to boldly go where no man has gone before (except not into Kosovo, obviously)".**
- **Pentagon admits USS Enterprise has sunk on training exercise after collision with Klingon Vessel.**
- **NATO send in F-94 super stealth laser-guided Smart Bombers to attack targets in Skopje.**
- **5,000 refugees flee to Macedonia to escape accidental death at hands of F-94 super stealth laser-guided Smart Bombers.**
- **NATO unveils new strategy to attack civilian targets in hope of hitting some Serb soldiers.**

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Godfrey Evans

So. Farewell
Then Godfrey
Evans.

Famous
England
Wicket-keeper.

"Howzat?"
That was
Your catchphrase.

And also
Your
Stump-phrase.

E.J. Thribb (17fi n.o.)

Cricket World Cup

Six To Watch

THE Eye's cut-out-and-keep guide to the top stars who will set the world of one-day cricket asleep *(Surely "alight"? Ed.)*.

Veridojeebowlah
Sri Lanka's wily spinmeister whose lethal armoury includes the off-break, the googly, the throw, the chuck and the obvious no ball.

Eye Rating: 9 for 33

Wazi Akruk
Pakistan's "Mr Nice" currently facing 11 charges of match fixing and bribery. A good bet if you've paid him.

Eye Rating: 3 years' suspended sentence

Welt Van de Druyver
South Africa's fiery paceman. Can always be identified by his white sun-block, "Don't want to look like a Keffir" he quips.

Eye Rating: PG

Patak Tandoorinan
India's master batsman — he can cope with anything that is thrown at him — including coins, bottles and fire bombs.

Eye Rating: Very Hot

Bruce Blimey
Australia's hardhitting Number 4 batsman who is always willing to thump the opposition around the ground — although he is not so good with the bat.

Eye Rating: 58 (People Retired Hurt)

Moses Wellington
The West Indie's demon bowler is 7ft 7in tall and delivers the ball at an astonishing 173 miles an hour — pretty fast for a leg spinner. Soon to join the NATO squad for the aerial bombardment of Belgrade.

Eye Rating: Ow!

Andy Useless
England's all-rounder, equally hopeless at batting, bowling and fielding. Needs to lose some weight if he isn't to make a huge impression on the pitch.

Eye Rating: 19 stone

(That's enough cricketers. Ed.)

World of Soccer

NEASDEN STUNNED AS BIG RON BOWS OUT

By **E.I. Erewego**, our man with an invitation to join Sonia at Neasden Erotica (formally the Boston Arms) for a personal demonstration of her lap-dancing skills

THE SOCCER world was rocked to its foundations as it has never been rocked before when Neasden's manager and tight-lipped legend, Big Ron Knee, said he would quit football for good at the end of the season.

In a brief letter to the club's Chairman, Brig. Buffy Cohen, Knee explained that his love of the game was as strong as ever but the run of disappointing results over the last thirty years, in which Neasden had never scored a single goal, had gone a long way in influencing his decision.

Big Ron's Agony

The ashen-faced supremo later told a press conference: "Saturday afternoons will not be the same, but I will be there by the radio, waiting to hear the results at five o'clock to find out how many goals the lads lost by."

End Of An Error

As the news began to sink in, small groups of fans (Sid and Doris Bonkers) gathered together try and come to terms with the fact that the man who had come to epitomise soccer management was to hang up his camelhair overcoat and put away his gold bracelets for good. Paying tribute, Sid Bonkers spoke for many when he said: "This is typical of Knee, dumping us when we are down. I hope he rots. The bastard."

The Footballing Ups And Downs Of Big Ron

1950: Spotted as a schoolboy missing three penalties in a row for local youth team. Joins Neasden as an apprentice.

1952: Scores own goal on debut for Neasden Juniors.

1959: Picked as sub for senior squad. Comes on for the last two minutes of extra time in a vital relegation battle. Misses penalty, scores own goal and gets red card.

1960: Appointed Neasden manager.

1984: Takes Neasden into Europe for the first time in the club's history. Narrowly beaten 32-0 by Belgium part-timers in the Ostend Ferry Charity Shield.

1990: Receives MBE for services to drinks industry.

STOP PRESS

Neasden manager Ron Knee was last night offered a new contract by the club. The deal which was believed to involve a unique no win cash bonus will take Knee's managerial career well into the next millennium. Ron Knee is 57.

Roy of the Fuggers
THESE ARE EXCITING TIMES FOR FUGHAM F.C.
WHY ARE YOU TWO ARGUING THEN?
MY COUNTRY NEEDS ME, ROY
AND IT DOESN'T NEED HIM!
NO-LIONS ON-YOUR VISA
FUGGIN' FUGGERS
Harrods

METROPOLITAN POLICE

Murder Hunt — 26th April

If you have any information about, or witnessed any news coverage of, the cold-blooded murder of hundreds of people in the Balkans, or other similar human tragedies which did not occur in West London on the above date — then you were probably not watching or listening to BBC News.

THE TIMES FRIDAY MAY 14 1999

What Jill's Killer Would Have Seen

BY TIMES CORRESPONDENT PHIL SPACE

THE number 94 bus, identified yesterday by Inspector Knacker at an identity parade of buses as the getaway bus used by the killer of TV presenter Jill Dando, operates one of London's most popular bus routes, passing such famous landmarks as the Neasden bus garage, the fountains in Trafalgar Square, Wembley Stadium and the Muswell Hill Tesco.

Had Jill's killer sat upstairs, as seems increasingly likely, he could well have enjoyed a "top deck" view of many of London's most popular tourist sites.

What he would have seen:

☐ Buckingham Palace, home of Britain's Queen;

☐ 37 Graythorpe Gardens, birthplace of carrot-haired TV mogul Chris Evans;

☐ The Duke of Ellington, fashionable jazz pub in Elephant and Castle (formerly The Slug and Lettuce);

☐ Chelsea's Toast Shop, the world's only emporium dedicated to the art of toastmaking;

☐ Notting Hill Underground Station, as seen in the hit film *Four Weddings And A Tube Station*.

This is a journey the TV presenter's killer would never have forgotten — and nor must we.

Wish You Were Still Here?

By PHILIPPA PAGE

WHAT made her so extraordinary was precisely that she was so ordinary.

It was her very ordinariness that made her so extraordinary.

In an age when *(cont'd in all newspapers)*

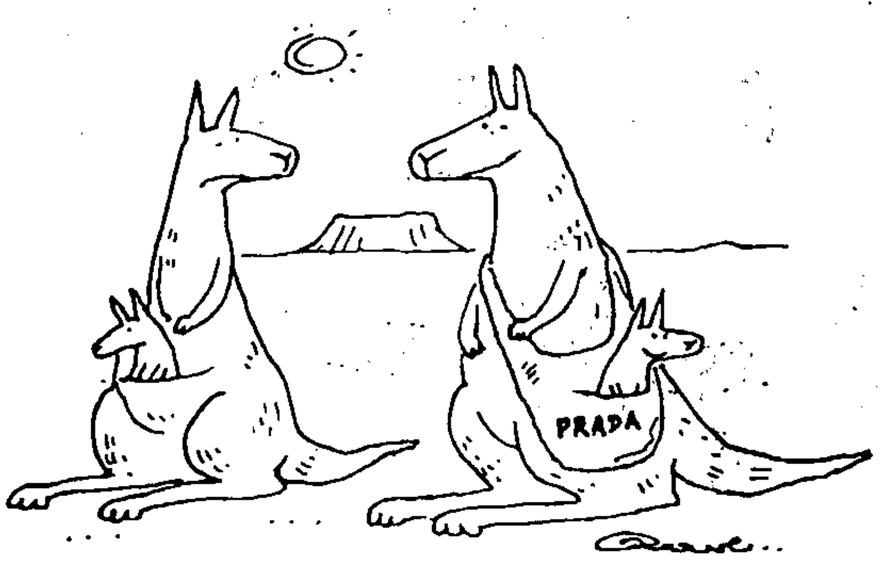
Plus, On Other Pages

Where Jill Shopped: Exclusive TV footage of all the 15 shops visited by the TV presenter in the hours before her murder 8-10

The Jill I Knew: by hundreds of BBC executives in suits 16

The Jill I Didn't Know: by hundreds of female columnists who had only seen her on the telly 20

Did Milosevic Personally Order Dando's Death? 21



Letters to the Editor

Mallory and Everest

SIR — In your account of the ill-fated 1924 Mallory-Irvine expedition to Everest you suggest that identification of the toothbrush discovered frozen in the snow in 1933 by Sir Percy Hattersley was possible because of three notches found on the stem of the brush.

Your correspondent claims that these notches were Mallory's signature on his toothbrush, dating from his time at prep school (St Biscuits 1897-99) when he habitually marked his toothbrushes in this way to signify that he was in Dormitory 3, a habit which persisted well into later life.

As someone who was an exact contemporary of Mallory at St Biscuits I can vouch for the fact that many boys marked their brushes in a similar fashion.

So, the celebrated "three notched brush" may in fact not have belonged to Mallory at all, but to one of his fellow Biscuitians, eg. Sir Horace Witherspoon, who though not known as a mountaineer, disappeared from his home in the Cotswolds on the morning of June 7th 1936 and was never seen again.

Is it not much more likely, in view of the above, that the body in the snow is not Mallory at all, but is none other than the true conqueror of Everest, Sir Horace Witherspoon?

SIR HERBERT GUSSET,
Base Camp 3,
C/o The Lamb And Flag,
Kington Miles, Dorset.

SIR — It is idle to pretend that a missing camera could solve the mystery of whether or not the two British heroes, Mallory and Irvine, were the first to scale the world's highest peak.

In his book, *Himalayan Holiday* (Callard & Bowser, 1938), another member of the expedition, E.V. Trubshaw, recalls that there was indeed a camera but that Irvine had forgotten to buy any film for it — a fact that considerably annoyed Mallory. Could this irritation have led to a subsequent bout of fisticuffs in the snow leading to the tragic accidental death of my fellow Old Cakeian, George Mallory? Is this why his body has only now been found? *(No. Ed.)*

SHERPA HOWARD,
c/o The Heseltine Home For
Retired Sherpas,
Haymarket.

Apology SIGNOR ROMANI PRODI

IN recent months, in common with all other newspapers, we may have given the impression that Signor Prodi, the former Italian prime minister, was the ideal candidate to become President of the European Commission, and the only possible successor to the discredited Mr Santer as the "unblemished reform-minded moral crusader needed to clean out the stinking Augean stables of Brussels".

Headlines such as "Blair Backs Italy's Mr Clean", "Prodi Washes Whiter Than White" and "Saluti — Signor Sleazebuster" may have led readers to believe that we in some way supported the candidature of Signor Prodi as a man of unparalleled probity who would single-handedly bring an end to the years of wholesale corruption and fraud at the heart of the European Union.

We now realise that there was not a jot or scintilla of truth in any of the above allegations, and are happy to accept that Signor Prodi has in fact been a centre of a long series of police investigations into the selling off of state assets to friends and associates of Signor Prodi, although at the same time we would in no way wish to suggest that he is a typical shady Eyetie politico who shouldn't be allowed within 1.61 kilometres of the top job in Brussels. We apologise for any confusion which may have arisen in the minds of our readers as a result of our previous articles and deeply regret any embarrassment caused to ourselves by our failure to read the cuttings and our acceptance of Mr Alastair Campbell's statement that Signor Prodi was "an outstanding member of the Third Way team whom the Prime Minister is proud to call a close personal friend".

Was He The Greatest Saint Of The 20th Century – Or A Fraud?

by Our Vatican Staff CHRISTINA O'BOOZE

POPE PAUL-JOHNSON I yesterday astonished the world by canonising a man who is still alive, the first time this has happened in history.

The new saint is a little-known British prime minister, Padre Tony (literally "The Holy One"), who commands the devotion of million of believers all over the world.

Shock

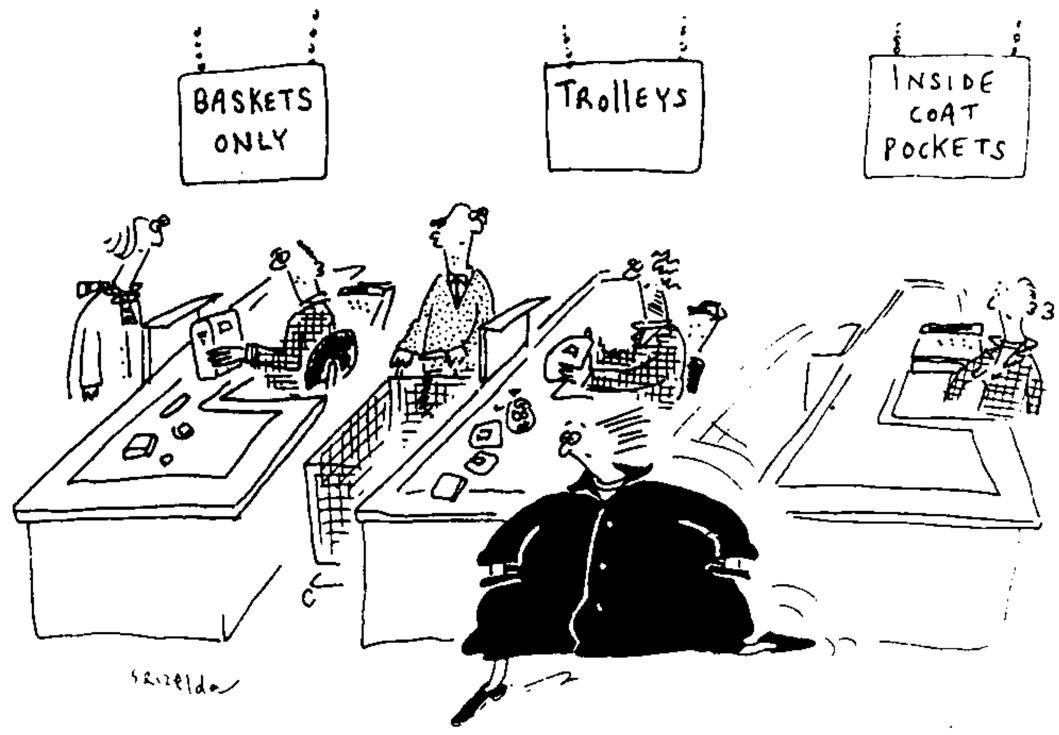
Pope Paul, in his encyclical in the *Spectator*, De Blairo Sanctissimo, cites a number of miracles attributed to Padre Tony:

- **he was many times seen with a bleeding heart on his sleeve, which was witnessed by millions, not only in Britain but also in Macedonia;**
- **he raised the Labour Party from the dead;**
- **he cast out many hereditary demons from the House of Lords and replaced them with his friends;**
- **he filled the hospitals with many sick people.**

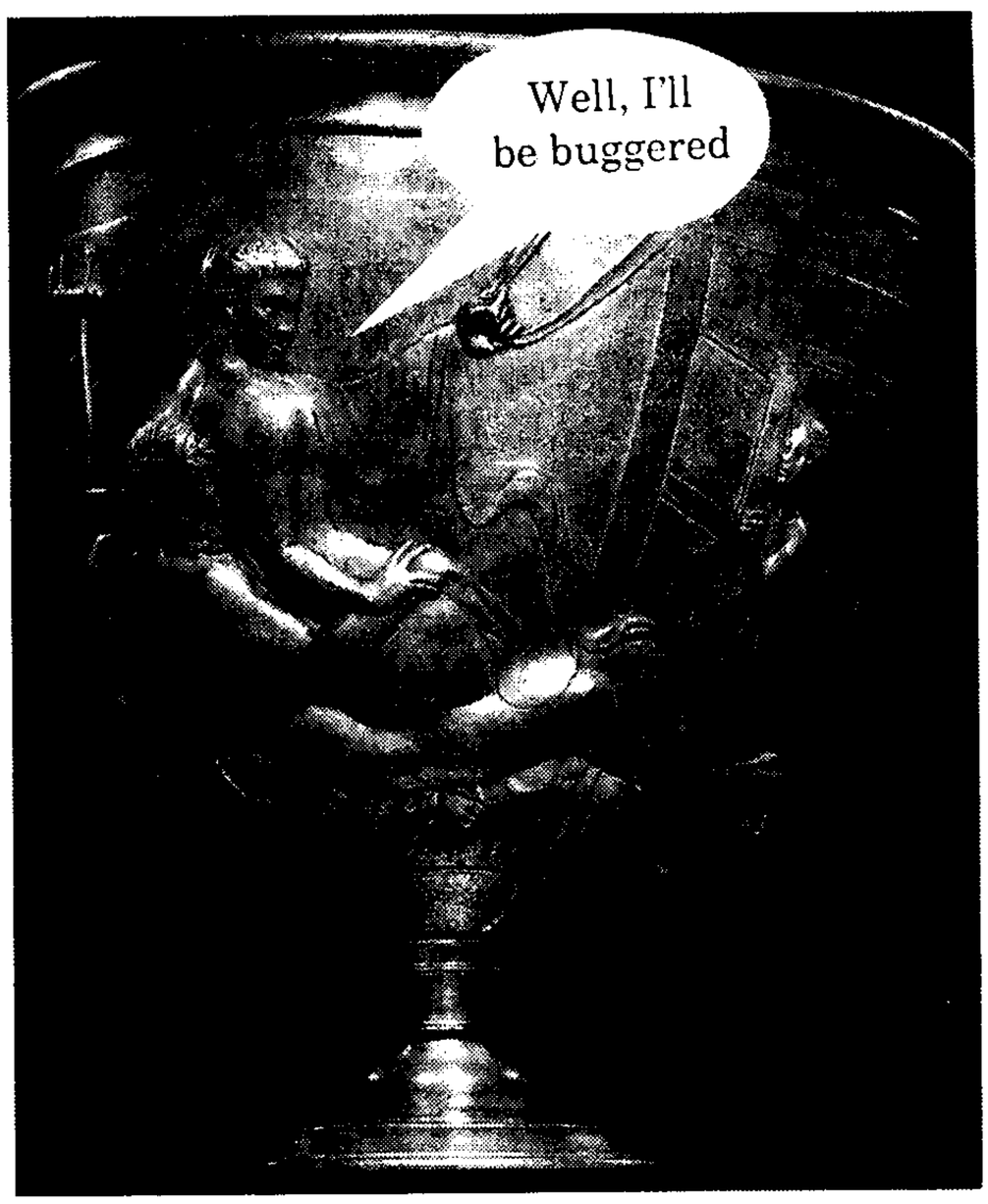
Outrage

Normally, it is the custom of the church to wait until a holy person is dead before they are made a saint.

On this occasion, however, it is widely believed that Padre Tony will never die, thus necessitating an early canonisation.

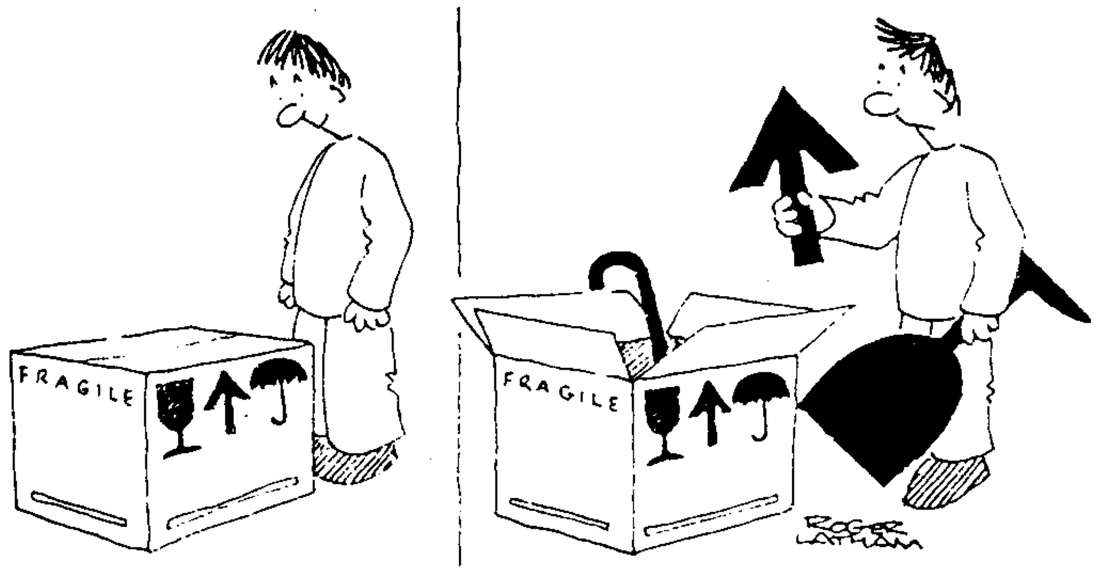


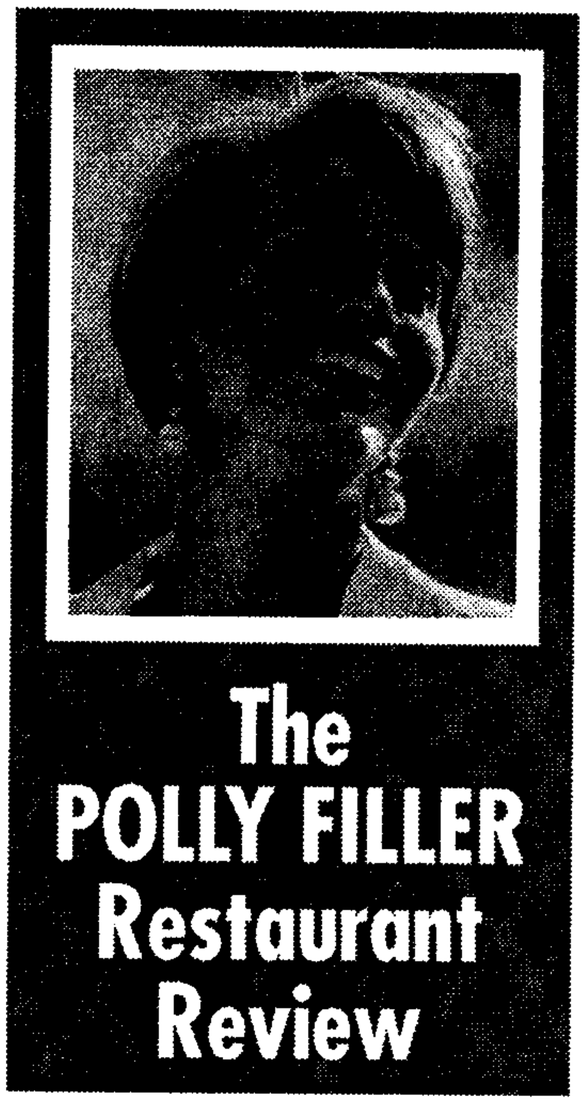
GAY ROMAN GOBLET BOUGHT FOR £1.8 MILLION



HEATH'S PRIVATE VIEW

ICA Julie Birchill Night
A GIRL LOOKED AT JULIE
LA LUNE
IT'S MY PARTY AND I'LL CRY IF I WANT TO
MOTOWN
SOUL
PUNK
JOHNNY ROTTEN
DISCO
YOU MUST SMOKE!
THE MALL
YOU'RE TOO STRAIGHT!
I THINK JULIE IS LARGER THAN LIFE
TRAFFIC ON DIVA-VERSION
DIANA
WHO PUT THE MMMM IN MOVIES??? MARILYN MONROE!
I TOLD YOU IT WOULD BE ALRIGHT ON THE DYKE
CORK SHOOTER
JOHN PEEL
CAMILLE PAGLIA
SALMAN RUSHDIE
ROLL UP! ROLL UP!
I TRIED TO MAKE ICON-TACT WITH HER
THANKS - I ONLY SMOKE MARLBORO LICHT
BED
DEAR ICA ..... CORPORATE BULL-SHIT VILLE
DEAR MADONNA.. I HAVE ONE THING TO SAY... MAX FACTOR: DON'T GO THERE
HEATH





The POLLY FILLER Restaurant Review

HUGO is in a bate. I had invited him and Amanda to join me for lunch (courtesy of this newspaper) and they couldn't find anywhere to park. "You should have caught a taxi like me," I told them and Amanda shot a withering glance at Hugo. "I know," she said. "You can't bring a 4x4 off-roader into Soho and expect to dump it outside the most popular restaurant in London, can you?" She and Hugo often spar with each other, as you'd expect from two such high-achieving media executives!

Anyway, she and Hugo had just got back from Bali and were suffering from jet lag. Added to which they had returned to find that their nanny had resigned just because they had left the children with her two weeks longer than they had promised. As Hugo remarked, "It's none of her bloody business." So, you can imagine how annoyed they were to be offered a menu containing endless *fish* dishes when everybody knows that they both hate fish.

Amanda promptly sent the menu back and wittily asked for another one "done properly". The incredibly rude waitress apologised to Amanda and said that since the restaurant was called "Poisson" they did tend to serve mostly fish dishes.

However, the silly girl sloped off after Hugo pointed out that a bad review from my good self might result in the closing down of the said "stupidly named" restaurant not to mention her summary dismissal! She quickly returned with a dismal selection of meat, pasta and salad options.

"Don't you do Thai Noodles?" said Amanda, who is renowned in our circles as something of a gourmet.

Instead of giving us a civil answer, the pathetic creature just burst into tears.

Hugo was having none of this sloppiness and demanded loudly to see the manager before he set fire to the tablecloth.

FELLOW diners obviously supported our principled stand as they all hurriedly left the restaurant muttering "What an appalling bunch of sh*ts!" Clearly, they had previous experience of the staff!

The oily manager then showed up and tried to placate us with free meals, free champagne and free liqueurs on the house — but we were having none of it.

We stormed out but not before Hugo had wickedly upset the table and Amanda had poured her wine over the waitress's head.

"I've never tasted such a filthy Chateau Petrus 72 in my life," she giggled knowledgeably.

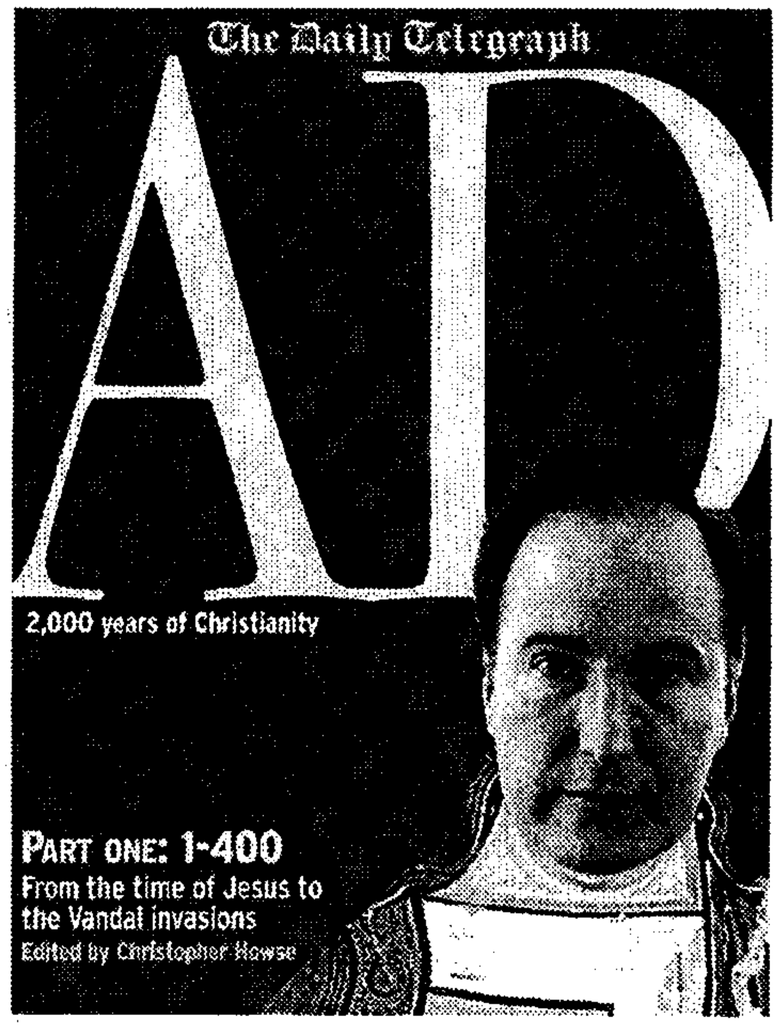
WE ALL agreed we would never eat at "Poisson" again — even though, as I joked to Hugo, "We didn't get as far as eating anything anyway." "That's a good joke," laughed Hugo. "You should put it in your column."

"No way," I told him. "I'm not so desperate for copy that I have to report every conversation I have with my friends over lunch in a restaurant."

Next week: Polly Filler checks out the new McDonald's restaurant on the Wandsworth Roundabout.

©*Polly Filler*

Now free with the Saturday Telegraph: the amazing AD section which charts the 2000-year history of the world's most important spiritual and cultural phenomenon — The Daily Telegraph


The Daily Telegraph
AD
2,000 years of Christianity
PART ONE: 1-400
From the time of Jesus to the Vandal invasions
Edited by Christopher Howse

975 AD

ST CHARLES OF MOORE becomes editor of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* taking over from former editor The Venerable Deedes.

He revolutionises the design, removing accounts of old style ecclesiastic events and replacing them with new style reports of rape and pillage in Wessex *(see Page III)*.

Also introduces front cover illuminations of semi-clad wenches, notably Elizabeth of Hurley. Perhaps best known for weekly sermons on the important issues of the day, such as "Are hair shirts being worn long this year?", "How celibacy can improve your love life" and "Are madrigals the new rock and roll?" *(Surely 'Gregorian Plainsong'? Ed.)*

Fell from grace due to his resisting closer ties with Europe (ie Norman invasion) and was declared a martyr by loyal followers in Tunbridgium (now Tunbridge Wells).

© *AD (Anno Dominic)*

NEW OLD SAYINGS

The Hurley bird catches the Daily Telegraph

DIARY

GEORGE WALDEN

Poor old Mahatma Gandhi. Though bald and a notably shabby dresser, he was far from stupid. With a little bit more oomph, he might have made a goodish civil servant, or a halfway competent Professor of something or other at one of our better redbrick universities. Yet for some reason he never conquered his innate laziness, and his career failed to amount to anything very much; even when he was assassinated he took a drearily long time to die.

He was a small man, but did I detect a giant chip upon his skinny shoulder? He was lucky enough to meet me once. I let him in on my ideas for the amalgamation of engineering and marine biology departments in the polytechnics of the North East of England. It was then that I first recognised his complete inability to grasp even the simplest of issues. I believe him to have been not unpleasant, but absurdly over-rated by the gullible English hierarchy. I never discovered what he thought of me — he was wedded to secrecy on all the major issues — though his anxious glances around the room made it crystal clear how much he admired my brain. Poor wee Mahatma: another of life's little casualties.

I was twenty-four summers gone when first my eyes stumbled upon the lissome shape of Miriam. Her intellectual attributes did not concern me, which was lucky, since she was as dense as only the English upper-middle classes can be. Meanwhile, I was busily re-reading *The Brothers Karamazov* in the original German, translating each sentence into French, followed by Hungarian, and only then into English, satisfying my intellectual curiosity by tackling each sentence in the right order, then back to front, and finally from the middle word outwards in both directions. Poor Miriam, with her below average brain, simply couldn't keep up.

But she more than made up in sexual energy what she lacked in intellectual acumen. In the bed-chamber she was content to lower her morals as drastically and ingenuously as outside it she had raised her skirts. We romped uninhibitedly, and I satisfied her over and over again, in all sort of inventive positions. I would seriously doubt whether poor little William Hague has achieved half as much in bed, even if he is the so-called Leader of the Conservative Party.

My first impression of Margaret Thatcher was positive. Whereas I suffered from the fatal inclination to see both sides of a question, to listen to other people, to have a broad range of interests beyond the narrow world of politics, to associate with leading artists and authors, and to formulate often brilliant opinions on a broad range of issues, she was blessed with the virtue of tunnel vision. My real interests were cultural, and largely outside the reach of politicians. Her enthusiasms were more mundane, but she went about them with a singular passion.

With my support, she remained Prime Minister for quite some little while: no small achievement, even in these mediocre times. But out of office, she was a sad sight. In the old days, she would put down a whisky soda or two late in the evening; now she seemed to have had a little too much before dinner, and over the prawn cocktail would begin forcing her fellow guests to engage in burping contests. Fuelled by a bottle of Jack Daniel's, she once challenged a visiting Ambassador to an arm-wrestling competition before storming out of the room in tears when he beat her. At a buffet dinner in honour of an East European Prime Minister, she got into a row with the Chief Secretary of Finance for the European Parliament and ended up kneeing him in the groin before passing out in a pool of her own vomit.

Poor old Margaret. Such episodes are best forgotten, lest they detract from her reputation. Call me a soppy old thing, but, like so many people, I still feel sentimental towards the raddled old thing. History will remember her for being always most solicitous towards me, never forgetting to ask her officials exactly who I was, and when I would be leaving.

It is impossible not to admire Rembrandt, a self-promoting Dutchman who never quite mastered his craft. I would not wish to compare my own self-portraits with his — after all, modern techniques provide us with superior canvases — but the poor fellow was, alas, no intellectual, and it shows. Incidentally, I have just finished re-re-reading a very long and, to some, complex work by an obscure Scandinavian author. I would, of course, mention its name, but you would not have heard of it, and, as a trained diplomat, I would not wish to embarrass you.

I had nothing against John Major, and certainly did not despise him as much as I might have done. I even maintained a certain respect for his dogged little mind. My instincts tell me he would have made a trusty second dog, of the tail-wagging, Bonio-eating variety.

But he was hampered by a fatal lack of political know-how. Consequently, his career ended in dismal failure. From my position as Junior Minister for Higher Education (Rulers, Rubbers and Pencils), I enjoyed observing the self-important way he bustled around Downing Street, for all the world as if he knew what the foggiest was going on.

I was once decent enough to give him a few tips on how to run the country. But I don't recall him ever thanking me. Perhaps he felt uncomfortable in my presence, as those without a proper education so often do.

Have you read "Don Quixote" four and a bit times? For pleasure? Well, I have. I said as much to Saul Bellow, the Nobel Prizewinner, when last he telephoned to congratulate me on my excellent piece in the *London Evening Standard*. But credit where credit's due. Poor old Ken Clarke may have been only a B-minus Chancellor, but he was a stranger to the steam-iron, and people loved him for it. More often than not, his jacket was smeared with porridge while his trousers betrayed the tell-tale stains of a rich mix of tomato ketchup and brown sauce. But the British like a tawdry overweight scruff, and I am happy to join them today in paying tribute today to this lazy fat slob of a man.

ARTICLE IN THE PAPER SIR THAT SAYS REGULAR SEX CAN MAKE ONE LOOK UP TO TEN YEARS YOUNGER.
REALLY JOHNSON?
APPARENTLY SEX AT LEAST THREE TIMES A WEEK HELPS US KEEP OUR LOOKS FOR LONGER.
OH! BUGGER.
SIGH MY ACTIVITIES IN THAT AREA HAVE BEEN FAR TOO MODEST RECENTLY.. ARRANGE ME A SECRET RENDEZVOUS
WINK
VERY GOOD, SIR.
TAKE ME, I'M YOURS. MAKE ME LOOK YOUNGER.
KNIGHT COSMETIC SURGEONS

Literary Review

Derby and Joan

My Friends' Secrets
Joan Collins
(André Deutsch, £16.99)

IT's the publishing industry's Hol y Grail. The book that can be written in minutes, designed in hours, published in days, and yet still walk out of shops without even being taught to crawl. A book that is, to all intents and purposes, a non-book – but not so much of a non-book that normal bookbuyers will be ashamed to buy it. It's the project that, to anyone with a percentage share in its success, exudes the sweet aroma of easy cash. All freelance writers have been trying to think of an equivalent for years. And of all the unlikeliest people, Joan Collins has thought of it first.

My Friends' Secrets is the sequel to *My Secrets*, a 1994 volume in which the ageless drama queen revealed the essence of her beauty and fitness regime, which may or may not have included the attentions of muscled young men and large quantities of industrial cement.

That book, for all its glossy frivolity, had at some stage to be written, very possibly by Joan herself. This new one has made no such inroads into anyone's time. Having exhausted her own supply of *Secrets*, Joan has now moved on to everyone else's. Hand-picking twenty of her very closest friends, all famous women between the ages of 40 and 75, she has met them for lunch, switched on the tape recorder and asked them how they manage to keep looking so wonderful. By and large they have told her.

Jacqueline Bisset, for instance, abjures salt and anything with too much perfume in it. "I never even use those wet towels they give you on airplanes," she shudders. They can carry *tons* of germs," shrieks Joan. "You should *always* wash your hands for at least twenty seconds," continues Jackie, warming to her theme. "Otherwise the soap's not rinsed away."

Most important, though, is her inner equilibrium. "What's *crucial* to me, Joan, is my *balance*, my feeling of *balance*. I need to have both feet planted securely on the ground." Otherwise there is the danger that she might fall over. But Jackie is particularly unimpressed by people who do too much exercise. "I think it's *sick* to spend so many hours working out," she says, after the name "Cher" has been mentioned. "I also have a thing about men exercising too much unless it's part of their job." Her current bloke is a martial arts expert, so that's all right then.

Barbara Taylor Bradford loves chips. "You're one of the few women who looks *great* at airports," says Joan. Barbara recommends good old-fashioned soap and water, and the power of positive thinking. "Is that how you've become so astonishingly successful?" asks Joan. "Yes!" screams Barbara. "Drive, ambition, dedication, hard work and talent. Not bad for a girl from Leeds!" as she has told only 10,000 or so journalists before.

Joan, it seems, is not of the hard-nosed school of interviewers. Indeed, she makes *Hello!* magazine look like the KGB. "You have the body of a 17-year-old," she tells Stefanie Powers of *Hart To Hart*. "How do you keep your amazing figure?" Polo, says Stefanie, who does not resemble Prince Charles one little bit, although they are about the same age. In one or two interviews the subject of cosmetic surgery is cautiously raised. Joan, fortunately, is all for it ("It's like fine-tuning"), and so are most of her interviewees, as can be confirmed in virtually every photograph in the book.

At a certain level, though, revelations come thick and fast. Morgan Fairchild's desert island luxury would be mascara. Shirley Bassey stays up until five in the morning watching bad films on Sky TV. Jerry Hall becomes enormously fat when pregnant, but has a washboard stomach again virtually before she's left hospital. And so on.

Is there any point sneering at this drivel? None whatsoever. Designed to look like a glossy magazine, and almost as emetic to read, *My Friends' Secrets* is as guaranteed a bestseller as you can find, a brilliant idea executed no better than it needs to be. The rest of us can only look on, bitter and jealous. "Think beautiful thoughts," says Joan several times. And look forward to even more beautiful cheques.

Thoughts of students as they fail their philosophy exams

interest in – say – advertising. Moreover, as he explained in late September, he had 'three roles' – 'MP, friend and adviser to Tony Blair, and front bent spokesperson responsible for election campaigning'.

MANDELSON – *Donald McIntyre*

WORK IN PROGRESS

The Ballad of Ford Open Prison

READERS of Lord Brocket's prison "memoir", as featured in the *Sunday Times* on 2 May, could be forgiven for thinking he spent all his time in Ford Open Prison among fellow toffs in an "Edwardian house party" atmosphere.

In fact Brocket did not have the time of his life there. The nascent writer merely has an imaginative streak.

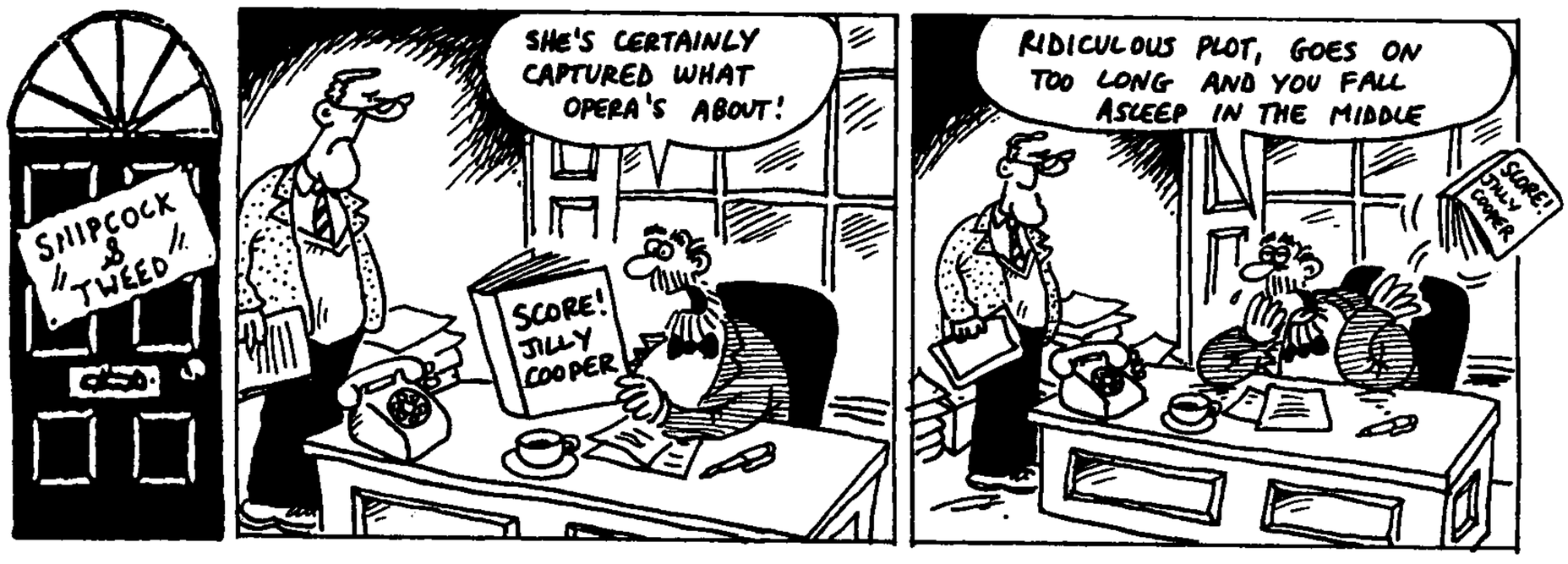
Lord Fraud started his seven-and-a-half year sentence at Brixton. The pathetic scene he paints of "snow blowing through cell bars and landing on me" happened there. Why he didn't just shut the window, easily reached from his top bunk on A Wing, is a mystery.

The minor fracas in which Brocket was stabbed happened at Leyhill, a semi-open prison in Gloucestershire. It was the thought of a peer of the realm being attacked by oiks that prompted Lord Longford and Dame Barbara Cartland to get Brocket transferred to gentlemanly Ford in West Sussex.

Prison officers don't like famous cons of course – especially rich ones. And every time Brocket settled on a cushy job at Ford with access to a word processor the screws moved him: from chapel to gym; from gym to education. He ended up a binman and was not allowed to do community service in an old people's home because he was "too high profile".

Brocket's memory of Ford cricket matches as being like "Edwardian house parties" is... fanciful. There is nothing polite about Ford's thugs in whites. PE officer Steve Brown took sadistic pleasure in picking people who'd never played before. Brocket watched the team from a bench outside his room and joined in the raucous effing and blinding. Visiting teams were sometimes shaken by the abuse – very Edwardian.

One privilege did come Brocket's way at Ford. As a con with military service (in the Guards), he was invited to lay the wreath on Remembrance Sunday – and he did it very well. The rest of the time he hated it. Brocket even went to the court of appeal to get his sentence reduced, on the grounds that he was having a simply horrid time and that the other inmates were being beastly to him. The court had little sympathy and ruled that he should serve his full sentence. He was, however, transferred to Spring Hill, where he was able to walk in the grounds, lie on the sunbed and write his "memoir". If he ever does find a publisher, it should all make a thrilling book... of fiction.


SNIPCOCK & TWEED
SHE'S CERTAINLY CAPTURED WHAT OPERA'S ABOUT!
SCORE! JILLY COOPER
RIDICULOUS PLOT, GOES ON TOO LONG AND YOU FALL ASLEEP IN THE MIDDLE
SCORE! JILLY COOPER

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ CAROLINE COON, founder of the drugs advice service Release, is following the example of George Harrison and Mick Jagger by suing Random House over Jonathon Green's book on the 1960s, *All Dressed Up*.

Naturally her first port of call was her regular firm of solicitors, Simons Muirhead Burton, who have represented her and Release for the past 30 years. Alas, the firm's litigation specialist Ravi Mireskandari revealed that he couldn't act for her as "I am a friend of Dan Franklin [publisher of the book] and I do work for Random House."

Conflict of interest works both ways, of course. If the firm couldn't represent its old client Coon, nor could it act for the publisher against her. Random House conceded the point, telling her that it would instead be represented by an entirely different solicitor, Michael Seifert.

Then Coon received her first letter from Seifert — and noticed that the address, phone and fax number were those of Simons Muirhead Burton. Seifert, it transpires, works from their offices and shares their secretaries, even though he is technically a "sole practitioner".

Last week an indignant Coon asked the high court to rule that there was an obvious conflict of interest here. When Mr Justice Gray found against her, Seifert (who is a millionaire) leapt to his feet and demanded the grand total of £924 in costs for the brief hearing. His bill included an astounding £154 for the costs of his 40-minute return journey between Soho and the High Court.

■ READERS of *In My Own Time*, Jeremy Thorpe's collection of memoirs published last month by parliamentary specialist Politico's, will be disappointed if they expected to hear much from the former Liberal leader about his alleged involvement with Norman Scott and subsequent trial for conspiracy to murder the male model.

The whole matter is dispatched in nine pages of the total 234, each one shot through with onion-in-the-hanky protestations of innocence and not one mention of Scott's poor wronged Great Dane, Rinka, famously shot dead by an inept hitman.

In contrast Thorpe devotes 13 pages to a boring travelogue of his beloved north Devon.

■ **ORION Books md Malcolm Edwards was reported in *Publishing News* last week as telling staff that the "radical traditions" of the recently-acquired Victor Gollancz non-fiction list will be "revitalised", with "critical texts on important issues" returning very much to the fore.**

What, then, is Gollancz's lead non-fiction title for this autumn? A searching analysis of the issues behind the crisis in Kosovo? Actually it's *Tulipomania* by Mike Dash, a coffee table tome on the troubled history of... the tulip (and a transparent attempt to cash in on Bloomsbury's runaway success with *The Tulip* by Anna Pavord).

■ THE paperback of *Trial by Conspiracy* (see *Eyes passim*), Jonathan Boyd Hunt's absurd "defence" of the unlovely Neil Hamilton, is unlikely now to appear, despite being trumpeted proudly at the London International Book Fair as a summer release by its schizophrenic publisher Aspire/GreeNZone.

Unsurprisingly it is the dismal performance of the hardback that has scuppered the plan.

Meanwhile, Hamilton's own attempts to shift the many unsold copies having now revealed it as the vanity publication it always was, the ex-MP has taken to flogging the book via his new website.

Hamilton, becoming more like the Rector of Stiffkey with each new self-publicity gambit, must hope it proves a more successful online bookselling venture than Boyd Hunt's, which has attracted only 300 visits since the book was published last October.

"Actually Moley, thanks to anger mangement counselling I'm not ratty anymore."

■ *WHAT has happened to the books pages in the* Mail on Sunday? *Since the "Night and Day" supplement was relaunched as a sexy, thrusting listings mag, literary material has been shunted out in favour of lists of "who's hot and who's not" and a sex confession column, "a lay in the life of".*

Books now reside in the review section, but no longer in the care of Paula Johnson, who was also shifted after 17 years' loyal service. Her excellent section, which found space for three or four lead reviews, stacks of paperbacks and a good deal of material from small publishers which was often ignored by much of the press, is now unrecognisable, thanks less to the valiant efforts of her successor Susannah Gross as to the philistinism of her superiors who would rather read about picture-heavy biographies of Ewan Macgregor than about old fashioned "books" that require reading.

■ EMMA TENNANT is apparently furious that Nicholas Shakespeare has, according to her, lifted chunks of *Girlitude* for his biography of Bruce Chatwin.

Shakespeare interviewed Tennant for his book, but threw together her quotes in a rather haphazard manner, presenting her in a not altogether favourable light. More interesting, however, is her contention that he came by the material that eventually ended up in *Bruce Chatwin* because he saw, without her knowledge, the manuscript of *Girlitude* – disseminated by Cape supremo Dan Franklin, Tennant's editor, and also, via co-publication with Harvill, Shakespeare's. Surely not?

■ **OVERHEARD in the toff's bookshop Heywood Hill the other day, a conversation about Emma Tennant: "She once had talent. But it was just ashes and dust, my dear, ashes and dust."**

■ FRIENDS of Verushka Wyatt have been claiming that she has only been offered "peanuts" for volume two of Lord Y-Fronts' diaries. With the number of remaindered copies of volume one lying around bookshops, "peanuts" might be considered generous.

'Bookworm'

Pseuds Corner

Burger King, the fast-foodchain owned by Diageo, is planning to revamp its 10,200 restaurants around the world — and says that tilting its hamburger logo is a key feature of the strategy.

Burger King said that the new, lopsided bun would "suggest motion and dimension" and "better reflect the company's core equities".

The Times

I have a great fondness for sombre strings, particularly Beethoven's late quartets. A year ago I was driving across central Turkey in the Peking to Paris Rally, listening to Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*. It went so well with the magnificent, huge, open countryside.

ROSIE THOMAS
Independent

She [Julie Burchill] also has a tremendous dignity and presence about her which could never be captured by camera or tape recorder. Then there's the ready wit. At a mutual friend's birthday party in 1991 she hailed me for the first time thus: "Oh, you're Will Self, aren't you — you love drugs, don't you? Well, I've got some really good ones and I'm going to give them to you."

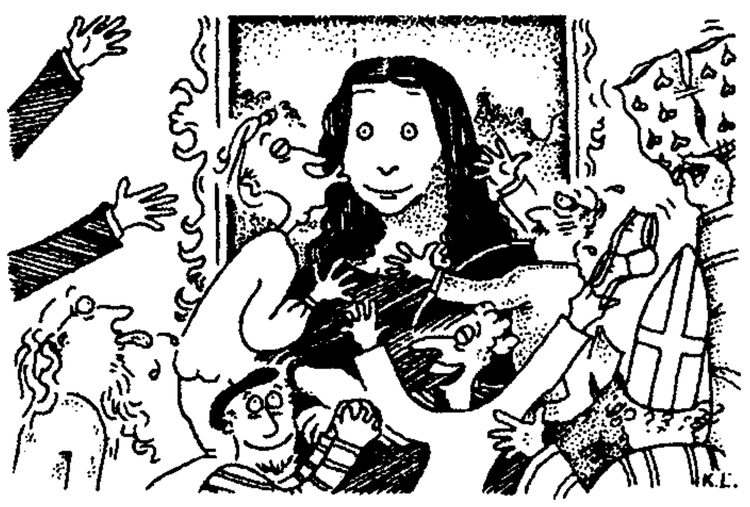
WILL SELF
Independent on Sunday

In the design phase, they [the inventors of the boardgame Abalone] concentrated on finding a way for people to touch each other, by literally touching their opponent's balls. The sound this made was vital to them (both Michel Lalet and partner Laurent Levy love music). They rejected the arrogant, aggressive, "schklah" sound, in favour of the smoother "pskew", which is reminiscent of a Jaguar's door being shut, and is soothing.

Financial Times

"When you go outside London it's amazing how slow everyone is. You realise you behave like a maniac. I was in Cornwall the other day and I thought 'I want an almond croissant', and I realised that there probably wasn't one within two hundred miles."

HANIF KUREISHI
Metro (London)



The Mona Lisa represents everything feminism cannot explain about woman's carnal magnetism, which for millenniums has fascinated or repelled men across the spectrum of sexual orientation. Mona Lisa's silence is profound. She exists in another dimension, where anatomy is destiny. She is untouched by politics, career or social ambition.

CAMILLE PAGLIA
Sunday Times

CONTRIBUTORS: W.I. Marsh, Andrew Beels, Paul Ashton, Ben Elford, Michael Carlson, Simon Burden.

£10 paid for entries

In the City

HOME SECRETARY Jack Straw's decision to refuse British citizenship to Mohamed Fayed should have come as no surprise to anyone — even the phoney pharaoh himself. Equally unsurprising is the manner in which Fayed continues to misrepresent the truth regarding the events surrounding the Rowland safe deposit box break-in, one of the two reasons for rejecting his application.

More surprising, however, is the preparedness of the *Observer*, which once exposed his activities, to join the *Daily Mirror* in allowing Fayed to peddle his lies, distortions and fantasies in a personal response to Straw's decision.

The official Fayed version, as presented unchallenged in the *Absurder* (9 May), is: "I had no part in opening the box myself but (Straw says) should have stopped my staff looking at the contents. I have apologised for that error of judgement, which I deeply regret. But it was not a criminal act — nothing was stolen."

The truth about what happened in the Harrods safe deposit centre once Fayed was informed that his hated business rival "Tiny" Rowland had a box there in December 1995 is very different — as *Eye* readers and Straw know only too well.

Far from the box being opened on one isolated occasion without Fayed's knowledge by an over-enthusiastic employee (Harrods security chief Bob Loftus, who blew the whistle to Rowland after he was sacked by Fayed), the evidence is that the box was opened not once, not twice but at least three times at Fayed's instruction and with his full knowledge. Furthermore a key was made so the Rowland box could be secretly opened at will. All of which Fayed would have the credulous believe was without his knowledge, instruction or participation?

Far from just "looking" at the contents Fayed ordered his inner circle to remove, examine and copy the documents and audio tapes in the box, some of which were passed to the *Sunday Times* via Fayed's then best friend turned critic Tom Bower.

And far from immediately regretting this single "error of judgement" and apologising once it was made public, it was only when Fayed and his underlings were faced with having to testify under oath in the high court last year about what he knew and did that he suddenly abandoned any defence to the action brought against him by Rowland's widow Josie. In doing so Fayed also dropped all the claims he now repeats in the *Absurder* blaming Loftus for the isolated, unauthorised opening. Claims which Loftus always vehemently and credibly denied declaring that everything was done at Fayed's behest.

As for "nothing was stolen": as part of surrendering to judgement in the Rowland case Fayed has accepted that various valuables worth at least £200,000 were taken along with certain of Rowland's papers.

Another Fayed lie is that he has paid damages in that case. He has not. A hearing on damages has yet to take place. Meanwhile Fayed and his crew have been served with questions which they are required to answer under oath about who did and knew what. These are designed to flush out whether three members of Fayed's inner circle — security chief John Macnamara, his former bodyguard Paul Handley-Greaves (recently departed) and personal assistant Mark Griffiths — are prepared to follow the pharaoh line, take the fall and claim their boss knew nothing of the first, second, third or subsequent occasions the Rowland box was opened and the contents removed wearing rubber gloves and taken to his private offices. Straw perhaps wondered why the pharaoh was unable to stop such repeated regrettable errors of judgement!

Already facing a bill for costs topping £1m Fayed will also be forced to pay damages for the missing valuable plus the serious breach of trust and invasion of privacy represented by the break-in. The amount is likely to be influenced by the answers to those questions. The answers and the damages they produce will no doubt also be referred to by the home secretary in any judicial review of his judgement that Fayed is not of "good character".

Also relevant to such a proceeding are likely to be other matters such as the circumstances in which jewellery belonging to another Harrods safe deposit box holder, Helga Schwarzschild, disappeared in Fayed's direction after the box was opened for non-payment of the rental.

Then there is the claim being brought by Bob Loftus against Fayed for breaches of the Data Protection Act in obtaining details of his and his wife's bank accounts in order to discover subsequent payments made to him by Rowland. Fayed admitted to obtaining such information in documents provided to Scotland Yard after he was arrested over the break-in. It was decided not to prosecute.

There are also the repeated allegations of telephone tapping and sexual harassment of female staff against the man who was allowed to tell *Absurder* readers: "I have lived a perfectly law abiding life in this country for 35 years."

Not to mention the current Scotland Yard investigation into allegations of favours to Metropolitan police officers in return for being ready to help by arresting or investigating Fayed enemies. Both Macnamara and his deputy are ex-Met. So are Handley-Greaves' successor and another new Harrods security recruit.

And then there is the little matter of Neil Hamilton whose libel action against the mendacious Momo is set for next November unless the law lords intervene. Fayed faces an unattractive choice in the Hamilton case. If he wins he will have been held to be a corrupter by "bunging" the former Tory MP to ask parliamentary questions about Rowland — the other reason Straw refused him a British passport. But if Hamilton wins it will be because Fayed is held to be a liar — a verdict already passed on him by government inspectors in the Department of Timidity & Inaction report into his Harrods takeover that he has never overturned, despite what he told the *Absurder*.

Given that choice it would not be a shock if, once again, rather than testify in court Fayed decides to walk away using some spurious excuse such as that the parliamentary commissioner for standards has already decided that Hamilton took his cash for questions.

Which brings us back to the *Observer*'s curious role in lending itself to Fayed's campaign of disinformation. Its sister paper the *Guardian*, which took the Fayed feed to expose not just Hamilton but also Jonathan Aitken, is greatly concerned that if

Hamilton defeats Fayed in court he will come for them next and their star witness will have been totally discredited. Whether that played any part in deciding to join the previously isolated *Daily Moron* in the Fayed camp is unclear.

What is clear is that the lightweight, lifestyle experts now responsible for *Observer Lite* either did not know or did not care that the man whose cause they promoted had not only been shown to be a liar and law breaker by their own paper in the not so distant past but had sued over previous *Observer* articles. Once more Fayed settled rather than go to court. But that was then and this is now. Next up in the *Absurder* comment pages perhaps Saddam Hussein on why the Kurds deserved to be gassed and Slobodan Milosevic on why the only good Kosovar is a dead Kosovar.

FURTHER evidence, should it be necessary, as to how Old Conservative are New Labour comes with news of exciting developments in the career of lawyer David Mills, better known as the husband of archetypal Blairite "babe" Tessa Jowell, the junior health minister. Mills has joined forces with the London operation of Marrache, one of the leading firms of lawyers from the offshore tax haven of Gibraltar.

This news will no doubt be welcomed at the treasury where chancellor Gordon Brown is busy conducting a campaign to limit if not eliminate the tax avoidance activities upon which Gibraltar like all the havens rely.

Mills is no stranger to the offshore world. He used to run CMM Corporate Services which provided offshore company formation and administration roles for overseas clients. Most famously these included Italy's Rupert Murdoch, Silvio Berlusconi. CMM's London offices were raided by the Serious Farce Office in 1996 at the request of Italian investigators who were seeking evidence of false accounting, bribery and illegal political donations. No wrong doing was alleged against Mills but Berlusconi was subsequently convicted.

Marrache too have had their share of colourful clients. They innocently acted for the conmen behind malt whisky telesales fraudsters Hamilton Spirit Management — the target of an SFO prosecution. Needless to say they have been helping the police with their inquiries.

No doubt Brown will look forward to calling upon David Mills' expertise and support in his plans to curb the tax havens like Gibraltar and introduce wide ranging anti-avoidance legislation.

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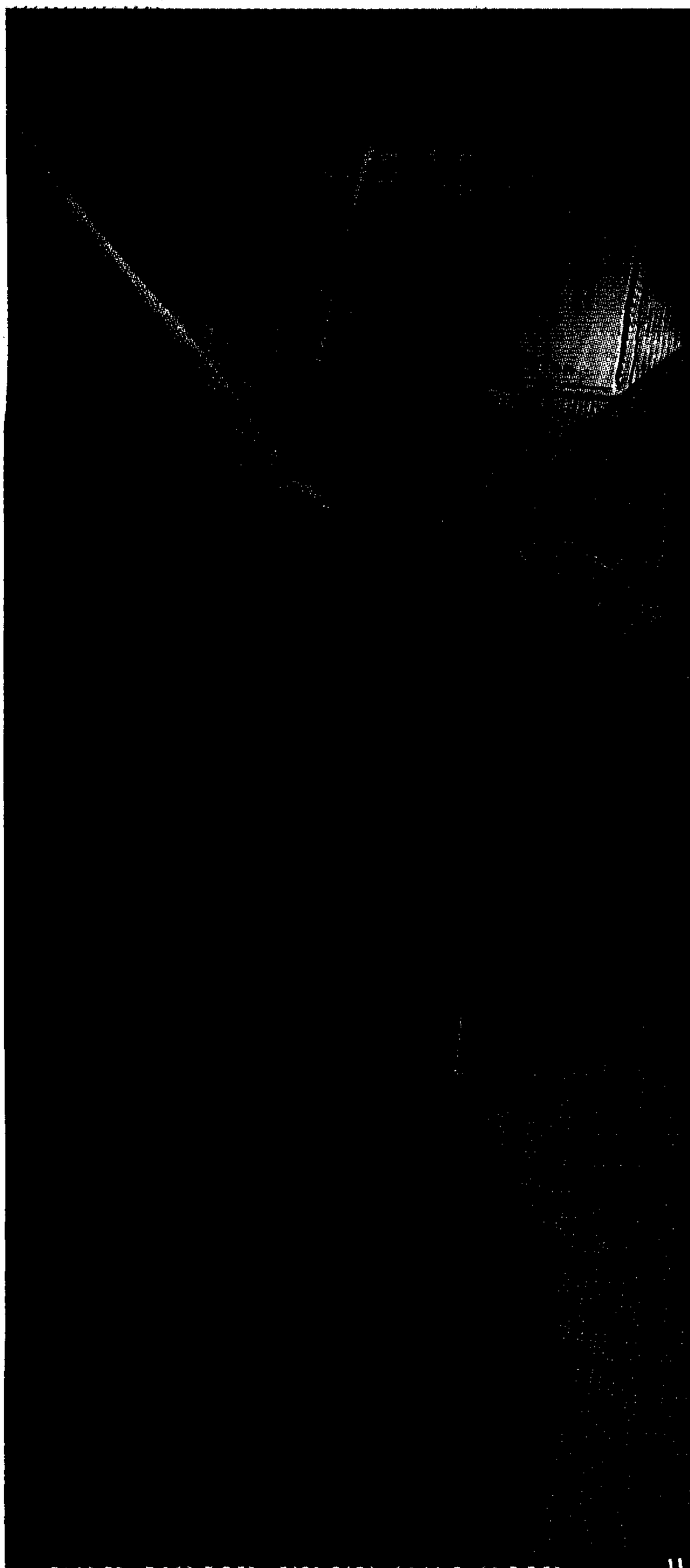

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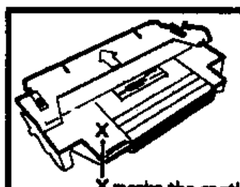

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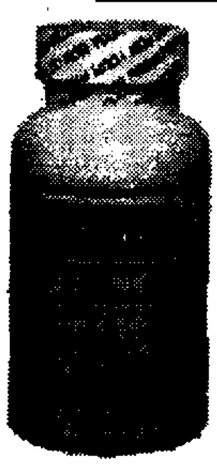

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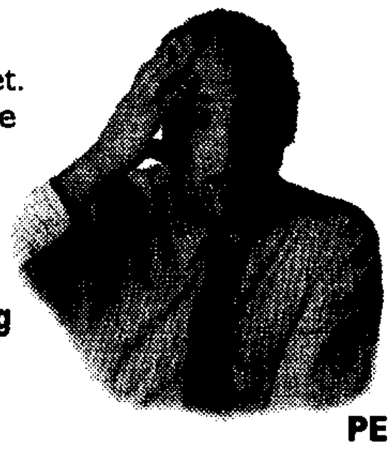

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CANADIAN EX-PAT, heartbroken – desperate for home – clearing debts, needs help. £4K. Anything gratefully appreciated. Nat West 47645636. Branch Code 50-21-16.

DOG AND MASTER are in disaster – need spare cash. Halifax 11-07-69, 00437545. Thankyou.

THERAPUTIC GARDENING project needs financial help urgently. Thank you. NATWEST 60 70 03, 0109927202.

MY BROTHER, an apprentice potter (7 years), is struggling to make ends meet while setting up a wood fired pottery in Somerset. Can you help? Box 1476.

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DAUGHTER TAKEN ILL whilst in States. No travel insurance, massive bill. Please help. Box 1976.

YOUNG WOMAN, post debt ridden man, trying to get life back on track, please help: a/nat 09-01-26, 36262323.

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HELP! NEED £4K but anything gratefully received. Barclays 20-36-43, 90091359.

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ABSOLUTELY DESPERATE reader facing bankruptcy, loss of son, subscription, seeks £8500, offers thanks, details, repayment. Lloyds 30-98-97, 0279575. Box 1975.

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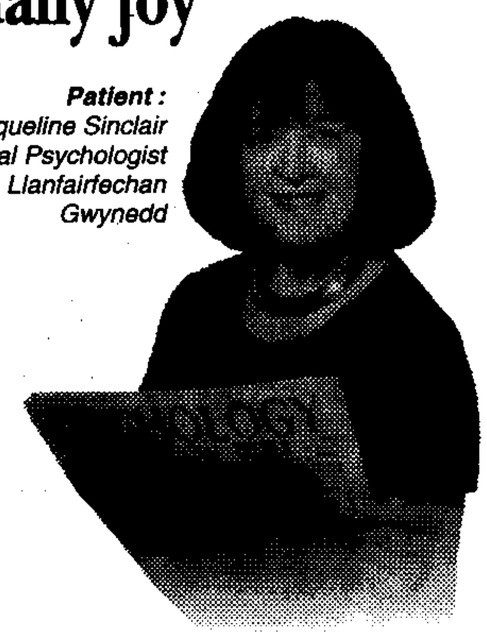

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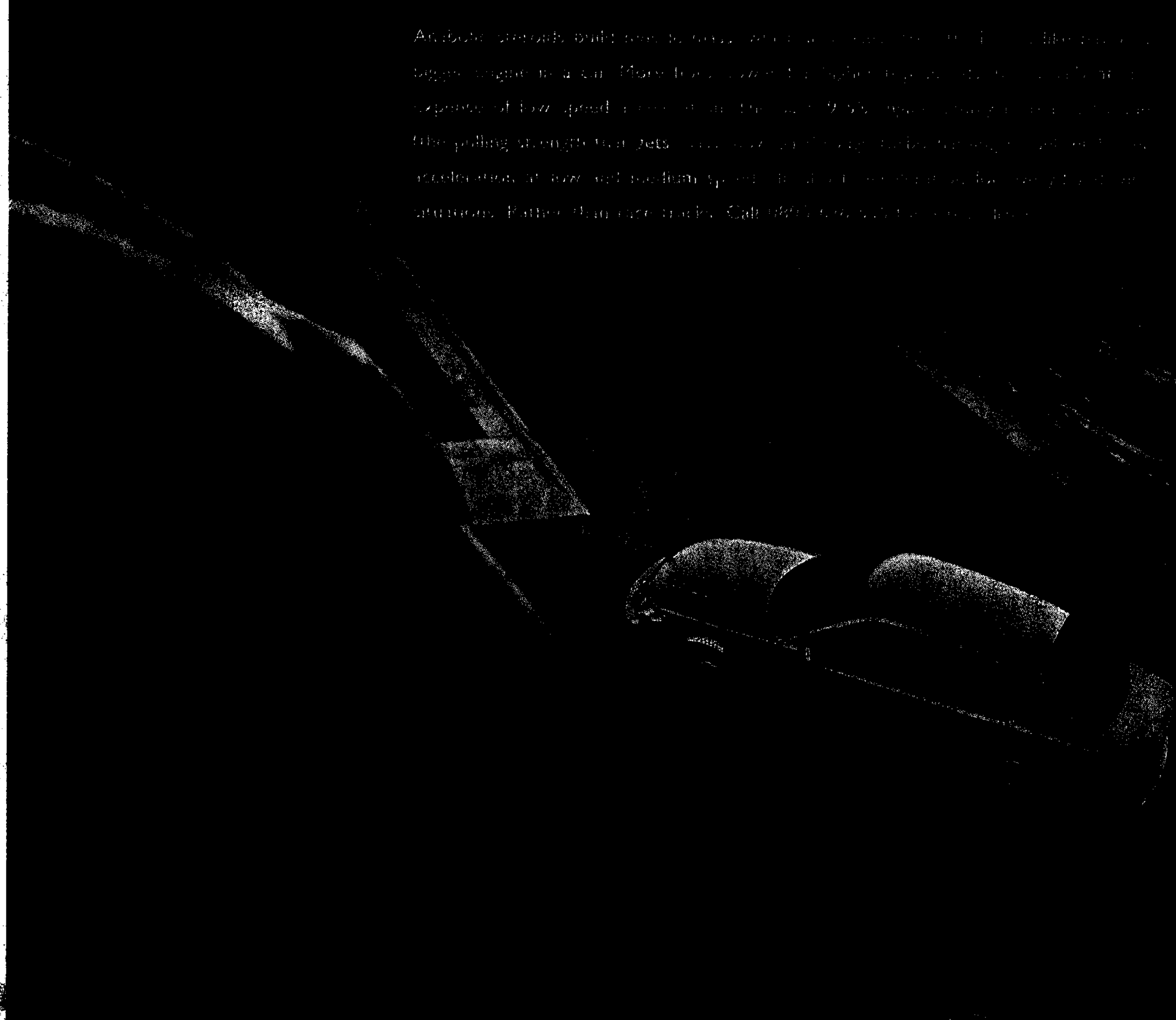

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